



Talking to Your Older Relative About a Move: Tips for Caregivers

- **Have a script mentally prepared.** Review in your mind what you would like to say and how you would like to say it. Keep your message clear and simple. Planning ahead for this conversation will allow you to deal with your own complex emotions beforehand so you can focus all your energy on being supportive and responsive to the person facing the move.
- **Forgive yourself in advance for making this decision.** Caregivers must make hard choices based on the realities of a senior's condition, financial resources and the available support network. If you blame yourself for taking this step, it will be hard to contain your emotions enough to communicate with the senior in the gentlest and most effective manner possible. Recognize that you are making the best decision you can given the situation.
- **Explain in practical rather than emotional terms why the move is necessary.** For example, tell them you do not feel that you are able to ensure they are safe and comfortable at home, not that the current situation is ruining your life or making you and the rest of the family miserable.
- **Give seniors a chance to express their reaction to the move.** Respect their feelings and do not try to talk them out of their feelings. Do not tell them how many friends they will make or how much better life will be. Rather, listen with patience, empathy and understanding. Allow them to grieve the loss of independence and experience the fear of what the changes will mean.
- **Do not make promises you cannot keep.** Caregivers sometimes coax seniors into moving with an offer to return home if they don't like the facility. Resist this urge; it could come back to haunt you. Instead, assure them that you will remain involved in their life and will always keep their best interests, as well as your own, at heart. Promise them that you'll always do your very best to see they have the best care possible.
- **Recognize everyone's need to have a sense of control of their lives and leave room for the senior to make some decisions.** Even if home is no longer a viable option, offer them some level of choice about how to make the move. You might line up 2 or 3 different facilities and let them choose between them. As much as possible, allow them to maintain a sense of control and support rather than appearing to take over.
- **Tell them you will help make their new home as "homelike" as possible.** Most communities allow residents to bring in some furnishings and accessories from home—this is important as it can greatly help residents feel more comfortable. It is also a good idea to discuss with the staff the routines of daily life that have been important to your relative so they can continue those routines as much as possible.



Tips for Caregivers:

Talking About a Move with a Person with Alzheimer's

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- **Have a script mentally prepared.** Review in your mind what you would like to say and how you would like to say it. Keep your message clear and simple. Planning ahead for this conversation will allow you to deal with your own complex emotions beforehand so you can focus all your energy on being supportive and responsive to the person facing the move.
- **Keep it simple.** Even in the early stages of Alzheimer's, a person has trouble organizing thoughts and thinking logically. Therefore, don't list all the reasons a move is necessary or discuss the in-depth details required for a move. Keep it simple!
- **Respond to emotion.** Because logical thinking is becoming impaired, people with Alzheimer's are going more on emotion. Respond to their emotion by validation—listening to them without judging or arguing; allow them to express their feelings.
- **Continue to give control as much as is reasonable.** You may need to make major decisions, but seek their input on the less important ones. You can reduce their anxiety and stress by limiting the choices you offer, but it is vital that they continue to feel a sense of control.

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For assistance with selecting the right community for your loved one,

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