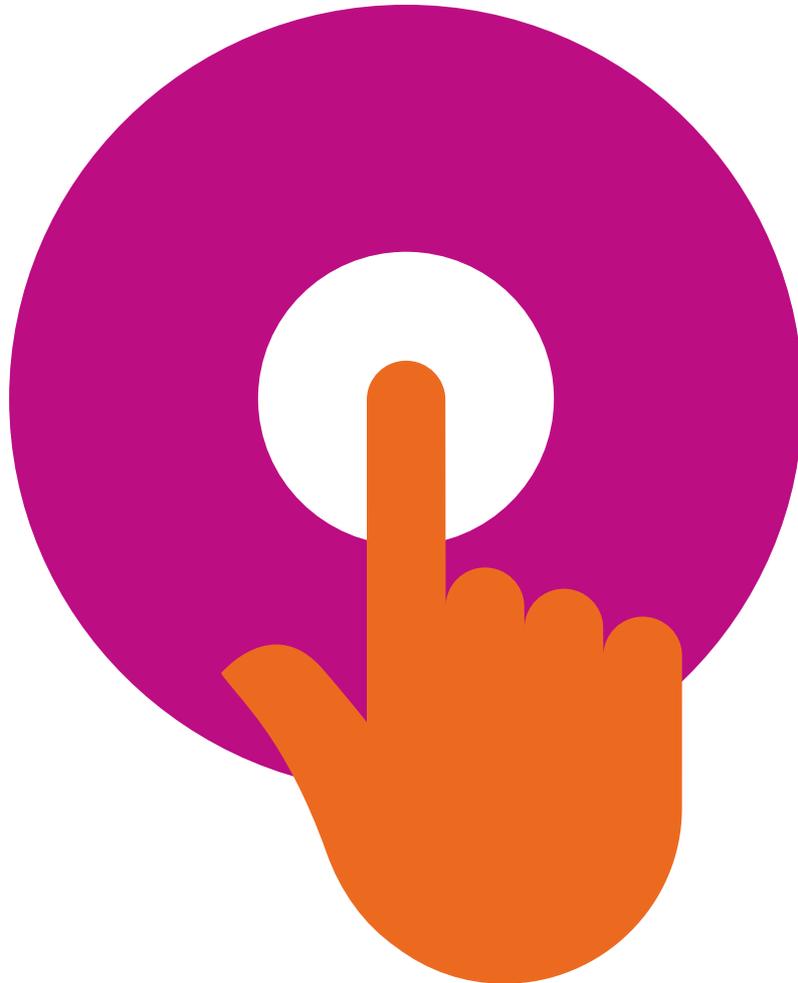


Ten top tips

for tackling difficult conversations
with your parents about their future



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1. Plan ahead

It's important to tackle this subject with your parents, but try not to rush into making decisions unless you have to. Planning ahead is essential to avoid panicking if a crisis happens. Even if everything seems okay at the moment, there are some important questions you should be asking – such as whether your parents have made a will and what care and support they would prefer – which will help you all plan ahead and cope with the future in the best way possible. Many people will only start thinking about their care after a crisis has already happened but it shouldn't be treated as a last resort.

2. Do your research

When it comes to talking about your parents' care, you do need to take the time to find information about all the options available to you. There is a wide range of support out there which has been designed to help a variety of needs. Taking the time to research and talk through the options carefully with your parents is a really important step to finding the best solution.

3. Seek out support

Don't put yourself under too much pressure. You shouldn't have to take on all the responsibility yourself as there is plenty of help and advice out there. Speak to siblings, other family members or close friends to work out how to approach the subject with your parents. Seek advice from your parents' GP and local authority about the best steps to take and what care options are available.

4. Give back control

It is often incredibly difficult for someone to learn how to become dependent on others after a lifetime of looking after themselves. Many people will naturally resist help for as long as possible because they don't want to become a burden to those around them. They might be less inclined to ask for help if they worry their independence will come under threat as a result. Look into care options like personal alarms, which can give someone the help they need to stay in control of their own safety and independence whilst providing reassurance to worried friends and relatives.

5. Find the right time and place

Think carefully about when and where you will start the conversation about the support your parents might need. If you don't already meet regularly, it could be tempting to bring up the subject when you see them at Christmas, or another family occasion, but this might make your parents feel under pressure. You need to make sure that both you and your parents have the time to talk and listen. So, it is best to pick a place and time when you can talk to each other without other distractions getting in the way and they will feel more relaxed and prepared.

6. Start a conversation

When you're ready to sit down and talk with your parents, try not to put them under pressure to get the answer you want straight away. If you aren't already talking about the future, it is more important to start an honest and ongoing conversation to understand their feelings, wishes and needs. This will help you eventually agree the best plan that will ensure they are as happy as possible.

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7. Talk regularly

It can become easier to show your support and bring up trickier subjects like this with your parents if you are already in the habit of talking about everyday things; such as your lives, what you are doing and what concerns you both. Even if it is impossible to speak face-to-face every week, just chatting regularly on the phone will help make them feel more prepared when you do have to bring up a more difficult subject. Skype can be a great way to keep in touch, as you can have face-to-face conversations

8. Listen out

While it is important to get your own concerns and opinions across, the conversation should also act as a fact-finding mission. You need to have a clear idea of what your parents think about what is quite a personal subject so it is important to really listen to what they have to say. Even if you already have your suspicions about what your parents think, be prepared to take on board different viewpoints and opinions as they really open up about how they feel.

9. Use examples

A good way to introduce the topic could be by bringing up specific examples, which aren't directly related to your parents. It will become less threatening for your parents to think about something that's happened to someone else, somewhere else. It could be something you've spotted in the news or about something that happened to a mutual friend or relative. Ask what your parents would want to happen to them in a similar situation.

10. Put yourself in your parents' shoes

If you're finding it difficult to make your parents understand your concerns, the first thing you need to do is make them understand is that you care about their safety, well-being and quality of life most of all. Think about how you would feel if you were in their situation as this might help you work out some good solutions and will hopefully show you understand where they are coming from. Have you considered what care and support you'd prefer as you grow older?

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