



Tips for Communicating with Your Loved One

Unless your aging senior is unable to express his or her wishes, all decisions about his or her care should be done together. The following are some suggestions for how to communicate effectively about care and quality of life issues.

- Prepare an agenda.
- Come up with a list of solutions to discuss.
- Set aside a time when neither of you will be interrupted.
- Start the discussion by sharing a story of a family member or friend who was in a similar situation.
- Speak clearly and stick to one agenda item at a time.
- Ask if he or she has already expressed his or her wishes with someone else or in writing.
- Be prepared for some negativity. Life changes are difficult for everyone.
- Have patience by allowing him or her enough time to express concerns, fears or feelings.
- Repeat back what you have heard to confirm understanding. Try not to make assumptions or jump to conclusions.
- Pay attention to body language and other nonverbal cues to get the full message.
- Be honest about medical prognosis, financial issues or your ability to help him or her.
- Express how you feel using "I" statements to show your concern. "I'm worried..."
- Encourage your loved one to be independent as long as possible.
- Consider using a third-party such as a social worker, counselor or care manager to facilitate the conversation.
- End the discussion as soon as one of you starts feeling tired or too angry to communicate effectively or arguing begins.
- Follow through on anything you have promised.

