



How to talk to mum and dad about needing care



How to broach the subject of care with your loved ones...

There are currently 10 million people in the UK that are over 65 years old. Care for the elderly is one of the council's hot topics but despite this, we still find it hard to talk about. Especially with the people for whom it really matters - our elderly loved ones.

People need care for all sorts of reasons, from support with everyday tasks to more advanced requirements such as Dementia, disability and end-of-life care. But how do you talk to someone about it? It can be a tricky topic to raise with mum, dad or even grandparents. Our regional care team give the following advice:

When should you start talking about care needs?

If you've noticed anything from a drop in personal hygiene to recurring forgetfulness or even weight loss, then it's probably a good idea to think about bringing up the subject of care with your loved one.

There's no 'best' time to do it but bear in mind some basic points to help:

- ♥ Try to chat to someone in the morning when they are likely to be most alert and not feeling tired or drained from the day's activities.
- ♥ Try to create a nice relaxed atmosphere so maybe over a nice cup of tea or coffee or lunch so that things feel very comfortable and normal.
- ♥ Above all, you need to try to remove the confrontational aspect of 'you need help'.

What sort of thing you should say

Remember that care can be a sensitive subject. Some people will really not like admitting that they need extra help and will have many anxieties around the topic. Reassurance is so important so talk about care positively and focus on all the benefits that having some extra help would bring. For example:

- ♥ Wouldn't it be great not to have to worry about the cleaning/chores etc?
- ♥ We could have more time to do nice things together
- ♥ You could get out and about a bit more and see your friends.
- ♥ You wouldn't have to worry about getting up in the night.

Try not to use closed questions. So rather than 'do you think you need some extra help or care?' instead ask what would it feel like to have a little help around the house? Talking to people in this open manner encourages them to be more open and accepting in return.

What not to say

Your elderly family or friend may see their situation very differently to you for a whole host of reasons. Don't try and argue or try to convince them otherwise. Instead try and imagine seeing the world through their eyes. It will help you to communicate effectively and sympathetically.

Never use accusatory or negative language. Avoid phrases like: *'You can't cope anymore'*, *'You are causing me stress'*, *'If you don't sort something you will have to go into care'* as this is likely to cause feelings of fear, anxiety and guilt.

Don't talk "about" your family or friend in front of them however innocent your intentions. In the main they can understand very well indeed but maybe can't communicate what they want so easily.





Deciding what care option is right for them...

Deciding what sort of care is best for our loved ones can be quite difficult, and often beset with a lot of anxiety on our part. How will someone cope with being with strange people in a care home or does the idea of making new friends appeal to them? Will they miss the familiarity of their own surroundings? As we get older, we often become a little more stuck in our ways, so how do you think they will cope with fitting into a new routine? Or would they prefer to do the things they want to, when they want to do them, by remaining at home?

Most people will assume that a care home is the only option so to help you feel confident, you should try to understand the options yourself before embarking on a discussion:

- ♥ **Domiciliary Care** - a carer makes short visits to the home to carry out tasks.
- ♥ **Residential Care** - your loved one leaves their home and moves into a care home.
- ♥ **Live-in Care** - a carer lives with your loved one in their home to ensure as much independence and normality is retained as possible.

Then, a good way to involve them in the choice is to let them talk through a series of questions. It is surprising how much more relaxed about the decision someone will be if they feel they can express themselves and have been listened to. If you would like some help with compiling a list of questions to ask, you will find a very helpful questionnaire at: www.promedica24.co.uk/clientchoices

How to reassure couples worried about being separated

Understandably, a big fear for many elderly couples is that by admitting they need help, they will be separated if one or both are forced into residential care. Often, this can lead to couples 'struggling on' as best they can which is not only dangerous for the partner needing the care, but also for the

caring partner themselves. Elderly carers often end up trying to run the home and care for their husband or wife and their own health suffers as a result.

Throughout any discussions, reassure both partners that there are alternatives to care homes and that separation is not on the agenda. Positive phrases and terminology can go a long way. Try language like:

"There are companies that can help you at home so you won't have to leave or live somewhere else. You could stay together and just have help here, wouldn't that be great?"

Talking to people in this open manner encourages them to be more open and accepting in return.

We all want the best for our loved ones. Difficult as it may seem, when talking about care do it; openly, calmly and in the most supportive manner. There are experts out there in the community that can help, don't be afraid to reach out to us for support and advice.

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