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Dec 2013 | By Stuart Greenblatt | [Comments](#)

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How to Talk to Your Parents About Senior Living

Many families are so separated geographically that the holiday season offers them the only opportunity to gather, celebrate and reflect.

These family gatherings also give you the chance to observe subtle changes that come with aging—especially with parents.

Has dad’s driving ability diminished? Did mom forget her favorite pie recipe? Is the house becoming too difficult for them to manage?

If your parents are getting to the point where you believe it’s time to consider a new living situation, then have that important conversation.

There’s no better time than during the holidays.

We asked aging experts from some of the North Shore’s leading senior living organizations to give us some pointers. Here’s what they had to say:

Gale Morgan, Gale Morgan, Vice President of Sales, Mather LifeWays: “The holidays are a time of nostalgia, and talking with parents about holidays past may be a natural entrée into a conversation about things they may be having trouble with now—decorating, shopping, preparing a big meal, or even feelings of loneliness. Having these important conversations in person, with siblings and other key family members present, could be the opening for discussing a lifestyle change for parents that would bring back joy, ease, and the ability to socialize and look forward to what the future may hold.”

Sian Moynihan, Sian Moynihan, Sales Director, Vi at The Glen: “Having ‘the conversation’ with your parents can be a delicate situation, although it’s a very important one to have when they are still able to make decisions. It’s best to be proactive when they are reasonably healthy and can have input on what they think is best for them at this point in their lives.

“Do your parents still drive? Has home maintenance become too burdensome? Do they feel lonely and isolated in their home from friends and family? Would they consider downsizing first to alleviate any feelings of being overwhelmed by all their possessions?

“Your parents might be unexpectedly relieved by your offer to help them instead of thinking they have to do it all themselves. Remember to respect and honor their wishes while always making sure that it is in the best interest of your parents so they can keep their dignity intact.”

Robert A. Werdan, Vice President, Marketing and Public Relations, Presbyterian Homes: “Let your agenda go; listen with full attention. Don’t rush them. Silence serves a purpose. Use questions, not statements. ‘Mom, you’re taking a lot of pills, would you like help with your medications? Have you thought about how you’d get around if you stopped driving?’



“Be direct, but non-confrontational. ‘Dad, you seem unsteady. What can we do to help protect you from falling? Mom, if you no longer wanted to live alone, where would you live?’”



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