

# ✓ How to Approach Difficult Family Conversations



Moving from the family home can be an emotionally-charged topic for seniors and their adult children. Approaching essential but difficult conversations during this time can be challenging. Here are a few tips from *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High* to help get you started:

**Start from the Heart** – Stay focused on what you REALLY hope to accomplish by answering these questions and keeping your answers in mind throughout the conversation:

- What do I want for me? For others?
- What do I want for this relationship?
- How would I behave if this is what I really want?

## THE SENIOR PERSPECTIVE

**Seniors want the best possible quality of life.** They want their family and friends to support them and help them execute their decisions—and they want to nurture essential relationships during the decision-making process and the transition.

What they don't want is more stress, guilt, emotional outbursts, drama and complication. They need help, not harassment. They don't want to be treated like children and they don't want to have others dictate what they should do.

## THE PERSPECTIVE OF ADULT CHILDREN

**Adult children want what is best for their parents.** They want them to be happy and healthy—and to feel secure in the decisions their parents make (or those they have to make on their behalf). Often in a “sandwich generation” situation, these individuals feel pulled in multiple directions.

Like their parents, they don't want more stress, guilt, emotional outbursts, drama and complication. They want to help their parents—not argue with them (or with other siblings) about the process.

They don't want to live in limbo for months or years, with decisions postponed until crisis hits. They don't want to make decisions alone.

**All parties should focus on achieving desired outcomes and ignore the urge to “win” any disagreements.** Avoid the natural tendency to argue about small details when everyone is in agreement about overall goals, and retain a respectful, considerate approach to all communications. The emotional nature of these conversations will make calm and respectful dialogue more challenging—but managing to accomplish this will be incredibly rewarding.

**These are the people we love.** Communicating with that focus on love, respect, and consideration will turn a potentially difficult situation into an opportunity for improved relationships and the best possible outcome.

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