



TIP SHEET: PREPARING FOR “THE TALK” WITH ELDERLY FAMILY MEMBERS

What are you trying to communicate to your parents?

- The anxiety you are feeling about their future?
- Your concern for their safety?
- Your love for them?
- Your worry that they will run out of money and still have years ahead of them?
- Fear that something will happen to them and you won't be able to help because not enough planning has been done?

Think about what might be on your parents' minds:

- If I think about getting really sick or dying, it is going to happen to me?
- If I let someone else have Power of Attorney, will he/she take control and I will lose my independence?
- I am not a child and don't need to be treated like a child.
- I don't know who my agent should be – my friends and siblings are as old as I am; I don't know which child to make my agent – I don't want to hurt the others' feelings.
- I am afraid they will run off with my money.
- It is too difficult to think about end-of-life decisions – I don't want to be a vegetable kept alive on tubes, but these days a person can go into a coma and then come out of it.
- Why are the kids asking me these things? Do they want to get rid of me?
- What if they make me move out of the house I have lived in for 50 years?

Ways to start the conversation with your parents:

- I have been working on my will, Power of Attorney and Health Care Proxy documents. It is challenging to think about the things that go into these documents, but there are important questions that I must answer:
 - Who will be my executor, agent or guardian for my kids if I get ill?
 - How should I divide my assets and to whom should I give them?
 - What do I want my agent to do if something happens to me and I cannot make decisions?

- Would an executor or agent know where to find all my assets if they needed to manage them?
- It occurred to me that I don't know anything about your affairs and would not be able to help you if anything happened to you.
- I am worrying about how I can afford to live a long time, especially if I need to hire caregivers to help me, so I am trying to plan ahead.
 - Would you be willing to share with me what you have done to address this issue for yourself, or if you have concerns about this?
- I want to be able to live out my life in my home, but as I get older I may need to move to a different home that is more accessible.
 - Do you ever worry about how you are going to manage in the house as it is now? Do you think about renovating the first floor or moving?
- I expect there will come a time when I am going to have to share more about my life than I want with someone who will help me to manage my financial affairs and medical issues.
- There's a difference between "losing control" and losing independence. Sometimes we have to let go of control in order to be able to remain in our homes.
- By making choices now, we can control who will care for us; by not choosing, we leave the decision up to the courts – an expensive and difficult process.

This is a difficult conversation for anyone. However, it may be more effective if you prepare ahead of time. Imagine what arguments might be raised. Think about how you can respond in a gentle, loving way. Planning ahead may help to make "the Talk" a little easier.