

How do I talk to my family member about leaving her/his home for health and safety reasons?

This is always a difficult thing to do! No one really wants to "give up" and acknowledge growing dependent on others for help. Obviously we need to begin this discussion with real care, not behaving like bulldozers, but rather inviting our loved one or person for whom we have concern, to explore the option with us.

DO NOT PRESENT THE CHOICE AS A DONE DEED! It is not respectful of the person, nor is it likely to be productive. Often the decision that is in the person's best interest is not as clear as we would like to believe. Mom or Dad, or any other person, might be having difficulty maintaining herself in his or her own home. Illness and frailty and other limitations may be getting in the way. But there are many options for dealing with such issues, moving is only one of them.

Before urging a person to make such a decision be sure it is truly necessary. Talk to the doctor and other professional caregivers and other family members before taking another step. If the growing consensus is that a move is clearly the best option, (if not already the situation) invite the person most involved to be a part of that decision in a real way. She/he is the major stakeholder and deserves to be included. Obviously cognitive impairment may make this more difficult to do, but a sincere attempt to do so is always warranted.

Some things to consider:

1. The best decisions are rational and based on objective data, rather than fear.
2. Partnering with a parent or loved one, rather than dictating, is always the better way to go.
3. Surprising someone, not informing them of your thoughts as you go along, is unfair and counter productive.
4. Trying to put yourself in the place of the other will help you understand and accept the emotional responses of the one you care for.
5. Sort through your own feelings! Is my concern self-centered ("It is so hard having to always worry about her/him.") or is it more about what really is best for the other person?
6. Never make arrangements for a move without first discussing all the options with the one most affected by a move.
7. Broach the subject calmly, with empathy, ready to receive every conceivable response. If you have someone with you as you do so, avoid the temptation or appearance of double-teaming or "ganging-up." Your loved one has to know his thoughts and concerns are being heard openly and honestly.