



DR. AMY D'APRIX

Essential Conversations with Aging Parents

PRESENTED BY CHARTWELL RETIREMENT RESIDENCES

Essential Conversations with our loved ones about important topics aren't just about reaching a decision—they acknowledge and honour the emotional components of decision-making.

Goals for Essential Conversations:

- Proactive planning before a crisis
- Decision-making built on respect
- Open and collaborative communication process

What are some of the Essential Conversations we need to have with our aging parents?

What are some of the barriers to planning with your parent(s)/family?

What tasks have you had to take on to help support your parent(s)?

Are your parents and the rest of your family on the same page when it comes to planning for future support? What are some of the different expectations, perspectives and goals that are making reaching a decision challenging?

Ask yourself: Why is it hard to really listen?

- We think we are right
- We may be in a hurry
- We have other issues/responsibilities going on
- The decision has serious consequences and we're afraid
- We may be angry about the past

Tools for effective conversation:

- **Listen** - Let your parent/family member express themselves without interrupting.
- **Empathize** - Validate what they are feeling without trying to negate or explain it away.
- **Reframe** - Let them know what they're feeling is normal.
- **Act** - Reiterate your suggested plan of action after they feel heard and understood.

Position vs. Interest

Our position is the thing we want, but our interest is the reason we want it.

What interests do you think are behind some of your parent(s)/family members' positions?

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Process for Essential Conversations:

1. Clearly identify the topic of conversation.
2. Start with processing, not problem-solving.
3. Make a plan to explore options or make a decision.
4. Schedule a follow-up conversation.

“Remember that the greatest human need is to feel heard and understood...not agreed with, but understood.”

Notes:

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About Dr. Amy

Dr. Amy D'Aprix, MSW, PhD, is an author, facilitator and coach specializing in life transition topics related to aging, retirement and caregiving. Committed to empowering people to care for themselves and their families, Dr. Amy promotes honest and productive discussion on a range of topics—from the financial impact of retirement to family relationships and overall health.

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