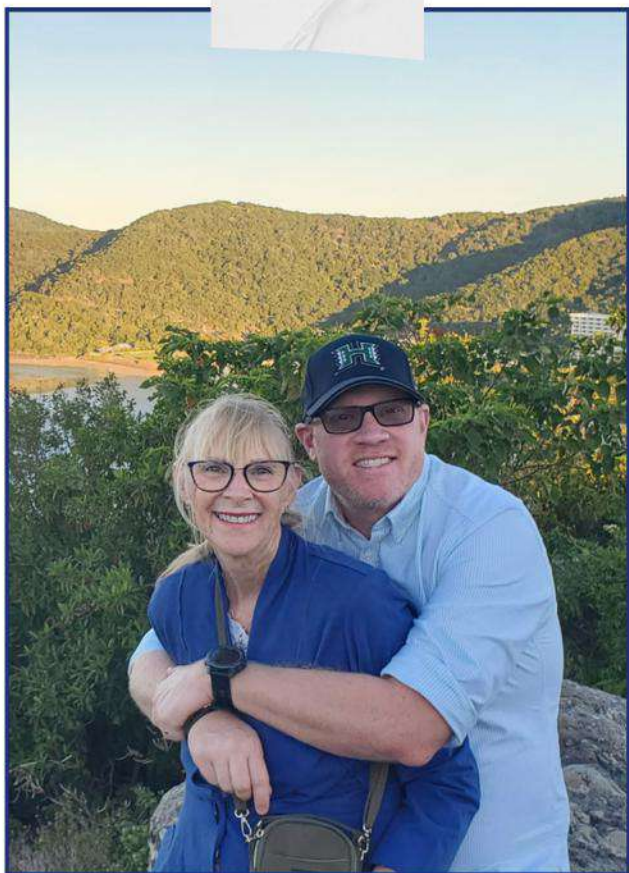


HOW TO DISCUSS

Moving Into a Nursing Home

Since my father passed, my 75-year-old mother has had three falls resulting in fractures. Amazingly, she is in very good shape, and the fractures healed well. As she lives alone in Colorado, fall risks are high. Additionally, the house requires more upkeep than she can manage herself, and paying a handyman for every small task becomes expensive. When mom took a trip to Waco to visit us that spring, I knew it was time for a difficult conversation, but I struggled to know where to start.



written by

Seth Robins ✱

When it is no longer safe for a loved one to live at home independently, how do you begin the conversation about assisted living or long-term care? You approach it with honesty and compassion.

I have been in healthcare administration for 20 years, and from that perspective, I have seen it is often the honesty part that both the loved one and their family struggle with the most. The loved one is often not honest with themselves about their needs—about what they can and cannot do.

The reasons for denial are complex. They often stem from a sense of shame that our culture unfairly places on those who become dependent on others. Wanting not to be a burden, loved ones try to manage independently, despite the risks it might pose to them.

On the other hand, families are often not honest with their loved one about what they can realistically provide. Support systems come in many forms and capacities. Sometimes, the loved one's needs are simply too great for any family to manage alone.

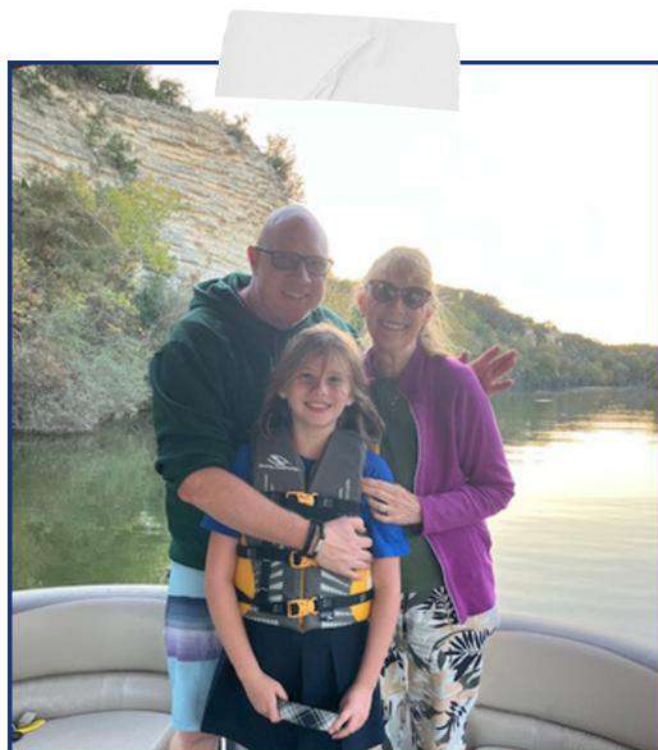
So, **begin with honesty.** Only through honesty can everyone fully assess both the loved one's needs and the family's capabilities. And hopefully, in that honesty, loved ones can express what they truly want.

Compassionate listening is essential.

Sometimes the loved one's desires align with the family's, and sometimes they do not. As each side shares honestly—what they need, want, and can do—it is vital to listen with compassion. The decision to move into a facility is never easy. Often, it does not feel like a choice at all—the need dictates the outcome. What we are really asking is for the loved one to accept that reality.

Acceptance means acknowledging that life as it was will change—that home, as it once was, will no longer be the same. It also means holding hope that the life ahead can still be meaningful and worth living.

And while we strive to make these environments supportive, it is still difficult, because it is not what anyone would choose. It is what is needed.



I once read that grieving the loss of one's independence can be as difficult as grieving the loss of a spouse or child. So, if you need to have this difficult conversation with a loved one, I hope this gives you a place to start.

I hope you have the time for a thoughtful, extended conversation about needs, desires, and capabilities. But if you do not—if your loved one is in a hospital bed and you only have tonight—just begin. Speak honestly. Listen honestly. Trust me, it will go a long way.

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