

Having “The Conversation” with our aging parents

As human beings, we need three things: someone to love, something to do, and something to look forward to. That’s how Lucille H. Deutsch, an eldercare consultant, began her talk with a group of RegentAtlantic clients and friends on June 4th, 2008.

“You can’t tell someone what to do. How do you like it when you’re told what to do?” Instead, Lucy talked about how we have a conversation – and not a monologue – with our parents. “Ask questions. Ask, ‘Mom, describe for me what would be the ideal situation for you?’” And she told us not to use “should” when we talk with our parents: “You should get out of this big old house.”

Lucy suggested that family members decide who is the best person to talk with mom or dad. Chose the one with the best relationship. And have the conversation in a place where our parents feel comfortable – most likely their own home. DON’T do this in an adult child’s home, she said. That changes the dynamics of the conversation.

What do you do when a parent becomes resistant to this conversation? Lucy suggested a simple statement like, “Mom, you raised me to be a good daughter. I’m concerned about your care and safety.”

Lucy gave us some inventory forms to help guide our actions. There are 2 documents:

- “Assessing the situation” - an inventory where we record observations of our parent’s abilities around the house. Use this to record over a period of time the changes we see in our parents living skills.
- “Calculating net worth” – a financial inventory.

Lucille H. Deutsch, CALA, is also a program director for Caregiver Outreach in the Workplace (a program of Family Service of Morris County).

Lucy provided these helpful thoughts on “Breaking the ice”.

Here are “Sample Topics” for discussion at your first family meeting.

For further information about dealing with your parents about accepting help, you may contact:

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