

Five Tips for Proactively Helping Aging Parents

Taking care of aging parents isn't easy, which is why being proactive can make a big difference for everyone involved. Here are five tips to help get you started.

#1: Start the conversation

Suggest your clients start a conversation about what's important to their parents. Assure your clients that often, the conversation takes more than one approach. It's a continuous dialogue as their parents grow older and their priorities shift. These conversations are never easy for either party. Have them try starting in a casual setting, such as over a meal or on a walk. Perhaps say, "Mom, I know this isn't easy to talk about, but I just want to have a discussion about what's important to you and what you might want should you become ill." Their best approach is to try to use open-ended questions, encouraging their parents to talk instead of answering their questions. Advise them to try to be sensitive and open to what's shared.

#2: Access medical needs

Share with your clients that a good baseline in assessing their loved one's health and medical needs is to review their ability to perform daily living activities. Do they need help with eating, bathing, dressing or going to the bathroom? Or moving from the bed to a chair? Based on this review, your clients may have more clarity on how best to start to assist their parents. Depending on the situation, their options could include a family member helping out as needed or an outside paid helper, health aide or visiting nurse. You can help by building your own list of trusted elder care managers and geriatric care specialists who already have experience handling these issues and can recommend appropriate resources to your clients.

#3: Review finances

Whether your client's loved one's medical needs are immediate or in the future, it's important to be aware of their finances. Clients should know their parents' sources of income, recurring expenses and assets and liabilities. They should also review and document their Medicare related policies, any long-term care insurance and any cash value life insurance policies that might help pay for medical expenses and supportive care services. They should also be sure that they know the professionals in their parents' lives, who they may have worked with, such as an accountant, attorney and financial advisor. Here you can help by creating a worksheet or critical information organizer to help your clients collect and organize this information.

#4: Review finances

It's also important to have the proper legal documents up to date and in place so they can help when needed. These include a durable power of attorney (POA), health care POA, healthcare directive and will. The health care POA and durable POA should be a priority for caregiving purposes. The health care directive allows your client's loved one to name a trusted person to make medical decisions for her on her behalf should she become incapacitated, and the durable POA allows a trusted individual to "step into their shoes" for most other legal and financial matters in her life if necessary.

#5: Assemble the team

We've all heard the saying, "it takes a village," when it comes to raising your kids. The same goes for taking care of parents. First, your clients probably need to include others in their family. Suggest your clients bring the family together to decide who's going to be the primary coordinator. Then they can try to divide up the responsibilities, mindful of matching the skill sets of sibling/family members to the task. Help your client make a list of all the professionals who might be necessary, and share your experience and recommendations when you can. Some spots on the list may start out empty, and you can work with your clients to help them identify potential professionals for those roles as the need arises, or even pro-actively. The team full team may include various health service providers and professionals as well as a financial advisor, accountant and attorney.

Need help getting started?

**The Robin S. Weingast & Associates team can help you
create a plan that works for you and your family.**

Contact us today! rswtpa.com

