

# 25 Reasons Why You CAN Take Care Of Your Aging Parents

*Start where you are, use what you have, do what you can.*

## **Reason #1**

*I have never talked to my parents about anything, especially not their money, their health or their future care plans.*

Remember, this is not really about YOU. It's about THEM and the type of support, if any, they may want as they approach this time in their life. If you start with an overview, or Big Picture type discussion, you will probably open up a conversation where your parents talk about their future in regards to care and aging.

If they will open up to you then everyone will have a sense of what they want to have happen, the challenges they see ahead, the alternatives they see for meeting those challenges, the resources that are available and whether their world could be exactly the way they want it to be as they age.

## **Reason #2**

*My parents have things everywhere. Even they aren't sure where everything is. How do I design a plan when I can't find anything?*

You have just described a situation where roughly 80% of the Baby Boom Generation will find themselves. The process does not promise that getting organized will be easy.....just that it is possible.

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Start with the basics and then move on to more complicated things. We are not saying that gathering and finding all the information will be easy, painless, or free of stress and difficulty. We are saying that there are two distinct times to do this: Now, while everyone is present, thinking clearly and can cooperate in putting all the information together, or later when you are trying to locate bank accounts, brokerage statements, wills and trusts, etc. at the same time you are trying to get your parent(s) taken care of health-wise.

Choose now, take charge, provide leadership and some direction. If, after you have tried to do this to no avail, reach out to some professionals for some help.

### **Reason #3**

*My parents say that they've already done this with their \_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank) Attorney, CPA, Banker, Broker, Insurance Agent, Rabbi, Priest, or Friend) and they don't need to do it again.*

Well, maybe they have and maybe they have not. I am pretty sure they have not done it with the simplicity, connectedness and thoroughness that working with us can provide. If they have, then hats off to them.

Most parents have completed pieces of the solution. They may have purchased a long term care policy or life insurance program. They may have executed wills or trust agreements. They may have designated health care powers and decided who the mantle clock goes to.

Find out what they have done and what else needs to be done. See if you can get them to share what is already in place and make them aware of what else is necessary. They will either open up here or choose not to.

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#### **Reason #4**

*My parents are very private about their money and it was a taboo subject in our life growing up. How do I get them to open up?*

Over the past 22 years it has been fascinating to see how clients will discuss their vacations, children, health ailments, job insecurities, and religious beliefs with family members but will not, except under penalty of death, reveal the fact that they have \$18,000 in a savings account somewhere.

Depression born or post-depression born children have grown up with fears concerning money that have fundamentally kept psychotherapists fully employed over the last century and savings accounts at national banks filled and overflowing with cash.

When dealing with money, there are certain Challenges, Alternatives, Resources, and Experiences attached to it. The goal is not to make judgments about whether the situation is good, bad, enough, or not enough. It simply uses what is there to maximize what it can. Try to shift the conversation from money as a secret or taboo subject to something more like a tool that works or does not work. The most important thing here is that you HAVE to talk about the money situation. Do it now.

Explain to your parents that you will not be able to be fully supportive and helpful if you do not know what they have done. Share with them that without knowing what has already been accomplished, you may waste precious hours and valuable resources duplicating efforts.

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## **Reason #5**

*My parents and I have never really been able to talk about anything and rarely see or talk with each other. What do I do?*

Maybe you do nothing . . . Maybe this process will not work for you or them. Maybe it is not, will not and never will be possible to have this conversation with them. Maybe it will never ever work with you and them.

But what if somehow it could work, don't you think you would like to find out now rather than later. Both parents and children wish at some point they had a better past as far as their relationship goes.

I am pretty sure that the best chance you have is to design a better future for them with or without my help. If we can do that or at least begin that, then we might have a lot to talk about going forward.

## **Reason #6**

*I can't do this by myself and I'm afraid of the potential conflict. What do I do?*

Here is a better question: If you don't, who will? If you begin the conversations and someone else wants to be a part of them, then let them . . . or not. If they don't want to, you probably will not hear from them. Remember that at some point in your parent's situation someone may have to help them make decisions or clean up messes from decisions that were not made.

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### **Reason #7**

*I grew up in a very close, communicative family and I know everyone will want to be involved or at a minimum level, informed about what's going on. How do we decide on who's in control?*

Great question!!! Here is a thought . . . why not let everyone who wants to be involved ask their own question. In other words, if they were to be involved, what are the Challenges they see facing them, what are the Alternatives they see to those challenges, what are all the Resources they could draw upon to meet those challenges and finally, what is the Experience they would like to have for themselves with this? As far as being in control is concerned . . . just opt out of the control thing. Be in charge instead of controlling.

### **Reason #8**

*My parents and I have lots of unresolved issues that continue to hinder our ability to talk and communicate with each other. How do we get past these issues in order to talk about this?*

Get past it.

Build a bridge.

Get over it.

If it is easy, do it easy. If it is hard, do it hard. Just get it done. Get out of the 'you never loved me', 'I didn't get a wagon', 'You liked Suzy better' psychobabble swamp.

Realize that some things can be fixed. Some cannot. Talk about what you can redesign, not what you cannot. Talk about the future not the past. You can create a completely new family

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structure by focusing on the future. There is no scientific evidence, no empirical studies and no best evidence that a thorough analysis of the past gives you a better future.

Here is what gives you a better future ... a better future. Focus on the privilege, the challenges, the honor, perhaps even the duty of helping your parents at this junction of their life. My experience has been that most issues disappear into the thin air they belong to once the adult diapers go on and the respirator is attached.

### **Reason #9**

I have my own life, my own family, my own responsibilities to take care of and I just can't do this.

OK, then don't. Bet you weren't expecting that!

### **Reason #10**

*I just can't deal with the pain and the hurt of what will come from talking about the end of life for my parents.*

Realize that this is not about you and your hurt. It's about your parents and their care. Step into a role of leadership, relationship, and creativity that brings confidence to the situation. Be that person that deep down your parents knew you would become.

Focus on what you can do, not what you can't.

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### **Reason #11**

*I have never been good with money and would be afraid to advise my parents about what to do or having to be responsible for all the decisions.*

None of us are experts at everything. And a lot of times knowing that you don't know is better than winging it. We can put you in contact with the right professionals to help guide you through the journey of helping your parents.

### **Reason #12**

*Even if I could talk to my Parents, how do I know who to trust with all the decisions that have to be made?*

In the financial area of life, the issue of trust really comes down to a fear of losing money. Luckily in today's information age, in just a few minutes you can hop online and do a thorough background check of healthcare professionals, lawyers, financial advisors, accountants, and anyone else that you'll need in the process. We also have a network of trusted advisors that may be able to help where we cannot.

### **Reason #13**

*I feel like I've already done a lot of the things you talk about. Why do I need this type of help?*

It never hurts to get a 2<sup>nd</sup> opinion. We always tell our clients that we want to hear them say "here's what I'm thinking of doing, what do you think?" .....not "here's what I just did, was that the right thing to do?"

Our process has been designed to provide a comprehensive, integrated strategy capable of being implemented by you and your advisors with or without our help. We'd love to help

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everyone, but also realize that everyone has their own way and timeline of doing things.

**Reason #14**

*My parents are already in a care facility. How can you help them now?*

We may not be able to, but we can try. Hopefully your parents made many of the important decisions prior to entering the facility and everything is well taken care of. Our experience has been that even though your parents are in a facility, there may be some areas that need tightening up.

In addition, maybe they haven't made the necessary financial or legal decisions to fully protect themselves and preserve their property, privacy, and person from the complicated consequences associated with aging. The resources that we offer may provide information and solutions that you overlooked.

**Reason #15**

*I don't have the training or the background to discuss all these things with my parents.*

Our process has been designed to work in partnership with professionals who have the training, background, and experience to discuss the more integrated issues of parent care.

The background you have is the years of being in a relationship with your parents. Presumably you are interested in this process because you have a genuine concern for the long-term care and well-being of your parents. A past history of caring is

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a huge advantage in beginning the conversations about your future relationship.

### **Reason #16**

*I don't see how I can afford to pay for a plan about my parent(s) care when I can't even pay for the care that they will need.*

Our plan has been designed to provide options and let you choose your course. Our experience over the years has been that folks without a plan very often make ill-advised and very expensive decisions when under the pressure of an immediate care decision. And if we can't help you we'll know that pretty early on in our conversation, meaning that there will be only a nominal consultation fee.

### **Reason #17**

*I have already organized all my parent's assets, reviewed their estate plan, updated their insurance, and everything else from a financial planning standpoint. What else is there left to do?*

Maybe nothing ... but then again ... maybe lots of things. The technicalities of Medicaid Planning, facility assessment, and caregiver selection, just to name a few, all have traps for the unwary. Even if you believe you have done a complete and thorough job in this area it may still be a good idea to have an experienced professional reaffirm your conclusions.

### **Reason #18**

*I just don't see a way to get all my siblings together to reach a consensus on what to do. Our family dynamics are not exactly normal.*

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The longer that I work in the area of families and aging parents the more I realize that not-the norm is the norm.

First, ask your siblings if they are interested in discussing the aging and long term care situation of your parents. Work with the ones who say yes to find out the common things that you see together about your parents.

Once you have this done approach your parents with the idea that you have met to help them have a better future around this idea. Will everyone want to participate? Probably not. Will everyone have an opinion? Probably yes. Will it work in every family situation? Probably not, some families just are not geared for talking no matter what the structure.

Groups of people exhibit strange behaviors. One year they elect a king ... the next year they vote to hang him. Families are no different. Just have the conversations. We can work with you to design a plan that is within your budget. The benefits of having a plan versus not having a plan are really too numerous to mention.

Fate, time and circumstance have a way of creating demands on us when our energies and resources are well below maximum capacity. By having a plan you can anticipate all but the most unforeseen circumstances. While it is clear that all plans change once the thing you planned for begins; it is also clear that without a plan every unplanned beginning brings about unpredictable results and consequences.

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## **Reason #20**

*My parents don't want to talk about their health with me but I see things that need attention.*

There are a number of reasons to talk with your parents about their health but the primary one has nothing to do with health at all. It has everything to do with regulation. The combination of Privacy Law and the health act, HIPAA have made it virtually impossible to give or receive information about another's health without the appropriate documentation. The combination of laws and regulations have made even the trusted family physician nervous about discussing health affairs. Minimally you need to have your parents execute a Health Care Power of Attorney or other type of Health Care Directive that gives you access to their medical information and influence and authority over their affairs.

## **Reason #21**

*How do I know whether I can trust someone who claims to be an expert in this area to act in my best interest? Aren't they just interested in selling me something?*

Those are two great questions and I have two great answers. We have the experience to take a family and/or parents through certain conversations and to charge a flat fee for that time and service. In that process, we will identify areas where you need help and can refer you to those professionals. We receive NO referral fees or compensation from anyone we recommend to you. By the end of our initial meeting process, you will have a clear idea of what needs to be done and a ballpark estimate of what it should cost (ie, planning fees, attorney fees, care manager fees, etc).

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## **Reason #22**

*How do I know who to trust with the management of my parent's assets once I put together a plan?*

The key here is what we call the 3 C's: Character, Competence, and Capability.

Let's take a look at these.

**Character:** Fundamentally, the person and business reputation of the advisor. A quick way is to ask for a client reference, an attorney or accountant who has done business with them and someone who has first-hand knowledge of the advisor's business and personal dealings.

**Competence:** Basically (1) How long have they been involved in their profession (2) Who have they done work for that you might know and (3) What are their professional credentials and accomplishments that would allow you to believe they have made a career habit of professional growth and development.

**Capability:** Capability is really about resources both intellectual and professional that allow the advisor to deliver what they represent they can deliver.

Lastly, don't forget to "Google" them.

## **Reason #23**

*How do I know if I am receiving value for the money I am paying?*

Value creation comes from whether the person providing the service is creating a structure and plan for you that helps you plan your parent's affairs. In other words, is this something

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that you could have done on your own, not paid a fee, and had the same outcome with similar certainty?

In our process, we fully disclose all fees in the beginning so that there are no surprises. It will ultimately be up to you to decide on the value of our services.

### **Reason #24**

*My parents say that they can't make all these decisions now because they aren't sure what they want to do and even if they did, they may want to change their mind.*

Well, maybe they can and then again, maybe they can't. Maybe they will and maybe they won't. The process and conversations have been designed to allow you and your parents to create the future by focusing on the challenges, alternatives, resources and experience in six fundamental areas.

We use a flexible process that IS capable of evolving and changing as your parent's situation evolves and changes. The important thing here is to get them to focus on their future.

Until you know what their future looks like from their eyes and until you are in a relationship with them where they are willing to share that, you have no real basis to go forward.

### **Reason #25**

*I have heard horror stories of children who have taken care of their aging parents and eventually regretted it because of the tremendous energy drain it created. Shouldn't we just leave this up to professionals?*

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First of all, resentment is a choice, not a predetermined outcome. It usually comes because of a lack of communication in a particular area not because of an abundance of it. Unless you completely separate yourself emotionally from your parents as well as physically refuse to be with them, you will minimally have to be involved with considerations about their care.

Make no mistake. Resentment over taking care of aging parents with the demands of emotional energy and financial resources can creep insidiously over time. This is exacerbated when you find yourself thrown into the middle of a parent care situation.

Our process has been designed to let you acknowledge the challenges of a situation, but not indulge them to the point where you are incapacitated by them.

It also provides a structure where most of the fears and concerns in a particular area are really dealt with from an arm's length. You can do this by beginning to consider the resources available to meet those challenges.

### **Reason #26**

*I don't know how to begin a conversation with my parents, much less continue it in order to find out all this stuff.*

Our process has been designed to let your parents do most of the talking and you do most of the listening.

The conversations create a structure where most of the essential issues are discussed. Start with The Big Picture stuff and move towards the more detailed talks. During the course of these conversations you will discover more about your parents and more of what is possible with your parents than you ever imagined.

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These conversations create a structure that assists you to anticipate the Challenges in a particular area of their life, to consider the Alternatives or actions or options available to meet those challenges, to learn about the Resources available to deal with the challenges, and finally, to anticipate and describe the Experience they would like to create for themselves and others if the challenges could be met.

We come hardwired to do those things. Rise to the challenge, take action, consider all resources, and actively move toward the experience you want to have. Remember, all the energy in a situation comes from focusing on the future, not analyzing the past.

**Reason #27**

*Where and how do I begin?*

Great question!

Go to [www.MarylandFinancialAdvocates.com](http://www.MarylandFinancialAdvocates.com) and get our most up to date resources. You can listen to podcasts, download reports, and read articles that may help you.

Our 5 step planning process addresses most issues that may arise if you are helping take care of an aging parent or relative. It's not all about money, and the questions we ask usually uncover a lot of goals and objectives that may have never been talked about.



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## **Step #1**

The Big Picture



## **Step #2**

The Parent Care Blueprint



## **Step #3**

The Family Planning Vision



## **Step #4**

Solutions and Strategies Activator



## **Step #5**

The Periodic Plan Inspection & Review

For more information and some of the resources we offer, go to [www.MarylandFinancialAdvocates.com](http://www.MarylandFinancialAdvocates.com) and look for the "Caring For Aging Parents" section.

You can also schedule an initial planning meeting right there on the website. And you can always call us at 410-663-0700.

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