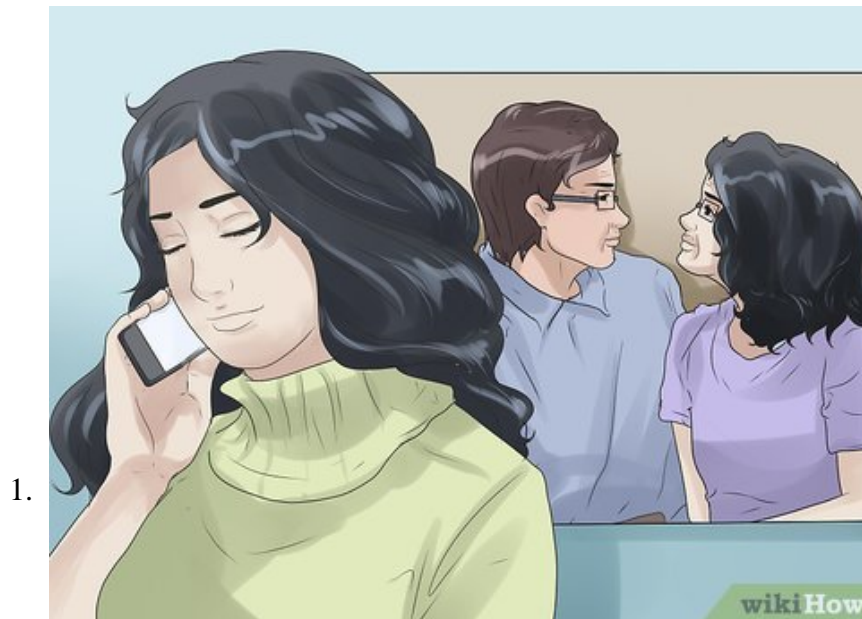


How to Communicate with an Elderly Parent

Communicating with elderly parents is an important part of keeping in touch and making sure that they're doing okay. As your parents age, there are likely to be concerns about their health, living arrangements and their ability to cope...

Part 1 of 5:

Maintaining contact



Stay in touch with your parents. Life is busy and change is inevitable. However, despite all the things that you have going on in your life, remember to keep your parents a part of it. Set aside a time at least once a week to call up or drop by and see how your parents are doing.

1. If you live a long way away from your parents, set up a means for communicating with them regularly. Skype is great because you can see them as well as talk to them. If they feel uncomfortable with the technology, ask someone who can help to set it up for them. Once they know how, it's unlikely they'll ever go back to older, clunkier ways of communicating.

2.



Ask your parents how things are. Keep up to date with their day-to-day happenings by asking them what they're doing. Also listen for the things they're not telling you, such as health problems or money worries.

1. Ask them if there is anything they need or that you can do for them. Sometimes you won't know unless you ask them, as many parents are very careful about not wanting to burden their children.

3.



Bring happiness into your parent's life. Call them, visit them and spend time having a good laugh together. Sure, there will be tales of sadness when they lose friends and stories of their hardships but it is important to remind them of what it's like to feel happy, to laugh and to see the beauty of the world.

1. Share jokes and funny stories together.
2. Remember happy things from the past. Retelling fond family memories can let them know you treasure the memories too.

Offering advice



Be willing to listen more than advise. Let your parents know that you are there for them and that you're happy to offer advice if wanted. However, don't foist advice onto them. They might be slower and less active than before but they're still capable of making their own decisions and it is important to respect this.



Be prepared to find suitable advisers that your parents might need. For example, if they need good financial or legal advice, help them to find a good financial planner or a lawyer. This is better than trying to offer advice on things you don't know much about. Even if you do know, it can also provide appropriate distance so that nobody feels taken advantage of.

3.



Think about how important it is to feel in control. Don't presume that your elderly parents are unable to take care of their needs unless there are clear signs that this is the case. Even then, respect that your elderly parents still care about their independence and being treated as someone who matters. Respect their dignity at all stages of the elderly years.

4.



Be very careful about suggesting that your parents are older than they are. For example, suggesting to your 76 year old dad who is relatively fit and still working hard that he needs a rail to help him get into the bath won't go down very well; on the other hand, if he's 86 and in poor health, this may be a good thing to suggest.

Part 3 of 5:

Explaining things

1.



Be clear when explaining anything to your parents. There is no need to over-complicate your explanations; keep them simple and ask for confirmation regularly that your elderly parent has understood and is happy to proceed without further explanation from you. This is contextual, so judge your approach accordingly—some elderly people are sprightly and switched on right into their 100s, while others may be losing their sight, mental agility and hearing much earlier.

1. Speak calmly at all times. This becomes even more important if you're discussing something that is highly emotional, such as downsizing the family home, moving to a nursing home, or changing their routine, etc.

2.



Approach difficult issues slowly and with lots of love. If you realize that your parents need to make a major change, such as moving to a nursing home or not replacing a lost pet, approach such future issues

early in small steps. Talk to them about their plans for the future and what they hope. Ask them what they feel about living in a smaller house or living in an environment where they have less to worry about. When you get a feel for what they prefer, you can slowly broach the topic of starting to make such changes. This is a much better way than avoiding such topics until you really have no alternative and then having to make massive decisions all at once.

Part 4 of 5:

Accepting the generation gap

1.



Be understanding of the things your parents care about. They have been doing things a certain way for a long time; for many people, making changes to their lifestyle, their opinions and their beliefs gets much harder as they age. Your views might differ a lot or you may even oppose their views but it's best to agree to disagree. Arguing vehemently won't change their mind and is likely to create a lot of tensions.

2.



Have trust in your parents. They have made their choices based on the things that mattered to them in the past and that still matter to them now. There will always be generation gaps but there are also similarities amid the differences. Connect with your parents on the things that both of you care about and believe in, such as family, the well-being of your children and shared interests.

1. Consider learning more about an interest a parent has. Use the internet to find out more on any subject and ask questions based on your research. Your parent will be thrilled that you want to find out more!

3.



Try to move beyond differences of opinion. No doubt you will still have some differences of opinion but always look for the common ground. Allay their fears that you are going to argue by simply agreeing that they may have a point and then change the subject.

1. Stay calm. Although there are years of emotional experiences between both of you, it is important to respond to your parents in a calm and caring way.

4.



Avoid being patronizing. If you end up brushing off your parent's viewpoints and treat them like children, they will feel insulted. It is important to be kind in all your approaches to your parents and not come across as condescending towards them.

Part 5 of 5:

Helping out

1.



Find out what your elderly parents need done. Start by simply asking them and listening to their needs. If they're too proud to say they need help or they can't think of anything, take a look around and see what might need doing. You can help out in many ways, such as:

1. Running errands for your parents; doing shopping, collecting medication, etc.

2. Walking their dog. If they are finding it harder to take the dog for a walk every day, help out on a few days to give them a break.
3. Reading for them or fixing the settings on their computer so that they find it easier to see the text and use the computer.

You finished reading the article "**How to Communicate with an Elderly Parent**" edited by the [TipsMake](#) team. We hope this article has provided you with many useful tech tips and tricks. You can search for similar articles on tips and guides. Thank you for reading and for following us regularly.
