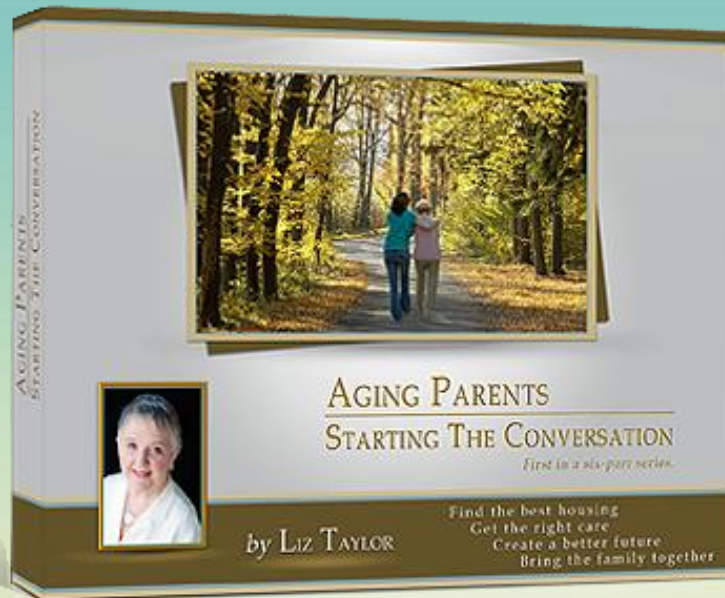




AN OVERVIEW



AGING PARENTS STARTING THE CONVERSATION

by LIZ TAYLOR

First in a six-part series.

To find the best housing
Get the right care
Create a better future
Bring the family together

“ LIZ TAYLOR HAS CREATED A MUST-READ ROADMAP FOR BEGINNING THE STEPS OF HELPING OUR AGING PARENTS OR LOVED ONES PREPARE FOR THEIR LONGEVITY. INVALUABLE ADVICE. ”

MAGGIE ROLFES, WA.

OVERVIEW



Never in the history of the world have so many people lived so long, a trend that is likely to continue far into our future. This unprecedented longevity, far more than in earlier generations, is causing millions of adult children - often with their own children still at home or even with grandchildren in college - to become responsible for the well-being and care of their aging parents.

Aging Parents: Starting the Conversation, is the first in a six-part series called, ***Aging Deliberately: A Guide to Caring for Aging Parents***, authored by Liz Taylor, a 35-year veteran in the aging field.

In this first volume of the series, Liz Taylor identifies the issues that families face when trying to make thoughtful decisions about the care services their parents might need, and how to bring them into the conversation. She offers tools, resources, and time-tested strategies for asking the right questions and beginning the dialogue to find the best answers.

Aging Parents: Starting the Conversation provides almost 60 pages of practical, hands-on advice and strategies you need for helping your parents – and yourself – prepare for the best possible third act. The path isn't easy, nor does it come naturally to most of us. To do it right requires more knowledge than you might imagine, on topics you never dreamed you'd need to know.

And, because every family is different, the strategies you use must be tailored to your parents' unique circumstances – their personalities,

diagnoses, where they live, how much money they have, even your family's dysfunctions.

The demographics have created our imperative. Now we must act.

Why so many of us are in this eldercare pickle today

A hundred years ago, the average American lived to just 47; today it's 78 – and climbing. People 85 and older are the fastest growing segment of the American population. Almost half suffer from a dementing illness, such as Alzheimer's disease.

Historically, families have cared for older parents, especially wives, daughters and daughters-in-law. But families in America are undergoing a radical transition:

- Many women work outside the home and cannot offer the extensive care an older person might need.
- Adult children often live hundreds, or thousands, of miles from their parents and aren't close enough to provide care.
- Many so-called “adult children” are, themselves, growing older and frailer. It's not unusual for a 75-year-old daughter to be caring for her 95-year-old mom.

A culture of denial

Research shows that people who participate in the decision to move or receive care as they get older adjust better. But many refuse to prepare for even the possibility of needing assistance someday.





Refusing to face their aging head-on, they lose control over what happens – just when they are at their most vulnerable. Then, in a crisis, families step in – often with no better preparation.

A crisis is the worst time to make important choices, especially ones as emotional, expensive and complicated as buying long-term care services for someone we love. Yet this is the way most people have been doing it for the last fifty years.

It's time to try something new.

We must begin to “age deliberately”

Aging deliberately means planning ahead for whatever life holds as we grow older and doing it in an informed, intelligent way. It requires doing your homework – researching your options, thinking about them, figuring out how you'll pay for them, and keeping your eyes open for new developments.

It also requires talking about your needs and concerns, your wishes and your preferences, with the people who care about you.

Ideally, the older person starts these conversations. Few do, however, and so others – daughters and daughters-in-law, mainly, but sometimes sons, spouses, granddaughters, partners or friends – must get the ball rolling.

How to start the conversation

In *Aging Parents: Starting the Conversation*, you'll find over a dozen practical strategies for getting older people involved in exploring their housing and care options. Sprinkled throughout the book are examples – other people's stories – to show you the many different ways they can work. By using your imagination, you'll see how you can adapt or combine one or two strategies -- or more -- to meet your unique situation.

As Liz writes:

My firm bias: I believe it's honorable and right for adult children or other family members or friends to try to help older loved ones make decisions and changes in their lives, even if the older people are absolutely certain it's unnecessary. As you'll see in these pages, those efforts might require a good measure of coaxing, cajoling, nagging, and pleading – even a few sly tricks. How far you go depends on the personalities involved....

Our parents grew up in a period when few people lived as long as they do today, and they're not prepared to deal with the issues they're now facing – or even recognize that they face them! They had no mentors or models to show them how, and so, now, in late life, they may require family members to intervene, to start the conversation.





Among the many things you'll learn in this book:

- The three rules of caregiving
- Letting your best intentions lead the way
- The importance of partnering with your parent
- The value of holding a family conference, and how to structure them
- Employing neutral tools
- Involving trusted people in your parents' decision-making
- When to do nothing
- Tough love – caring for parents who insist on resisting
- Leaving the door ajar
- Working with a geriatric care manager

In the last chapter, you'll find helpful information on the essential paperwork you need to ensure that the health care and legal systems recognize your authority to make decisions on your parents' behalf, and your right to protect their interests. Included are tips on naming key decision-makers, the reality of "heroic measures," what happens if you don't have these documents, and where to obtain them.

Please note: This book sets the stage for caring for all older people, but especially those with normal memory. Our next book, *Dementia Care: The Long Goodbye*, addresses the additional strategies for people who have a dementing illness.

It's never too soon -- or too late -- to start the conversation with your aging parents.

Whether it's your mom, dad, a spouse or a neighbor, figuring out what services an older person needs, and how to pay for them, are significant hurdles. Often, getting them to explore their options can be tougher still. It requires planning and patience. The sooner you begin, the better your possible outcomes will be.

It may take a lot of hard work to find the right solutions for you and your parents. You may find more questions than answers at first. But take heart, because millions of family members are doing it every day. And, you can, too.

About the author: Liz Taylor is an award-winning journalist, speaker, consumer educator, and policy pioneer on a host of aging issues. Beginning her career as a consumer fraud investigator for the U.S. Federal Trade Commission (FTC), she directed a nationwide investigation of the nursing home industry in the mid-70s. In the mid-80s, she became one of the first geriatric care managers in the Pacific Northwest, a business she continues to this day. From 1994 to 2008, she wrote a popular weekly column on aging in The Seattle Times. Her mission: to educate families, older people, community planners, legislators, and service providers about the critical issues that affect our quality of life as we age.

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