



# Guidelines for Communicating with the Elderly

1. Plan ahead for conversation: location, time, who will be present, topic and goal of conversation, practice the conversation
2. Clarify your own feelings and values before the conversation, know how you feel about the topic or situation
3. Be sure that the environment is conducive to serious conversation, free of distractions and noise. Be sure that the elder has needed eye glasses and hearing aids.
4. Focus on the main topic, be clear about topic
5. Use "I" statements. Begin declarative statements with the word "I". Talk about "My feelings...", "My view...", "My perception...", "My concern is..." "I" statements can lead to negotiation and sharing. "You" statements often lead to war.
6. Give time for the elder to process and think about the topic. Give time for them to accept the accompanying change.
7. Respect others rights to disagree. Remember people who love us can disagree with us.
8. Be clear and assertive (not aggressive) about your point of view without denying others theirs.
9. Keep your feelings of anger under control, avoid blame.
10. Let your ears rule the conversation. Don't do all the talking.
11. Be prepared to revisit the issue several times. A seemingly quick agreement may be changed as the elder reflects on the issue.
12. Keep a team attitude, these are not competitive situations where there is a winner (kids, family, professional) or loser (elder). All sides win when they work together to find the best solution for the ENTIRE FAMILY.