



# WHERE DO I START?

A Simple Guide For Families  
Helping Aging Parents

# WELCOME

If you've ever caught yourself thinking, "We need to have this talk, but I don't even know where to begin..." — you're not alone. And you're exactly where you need to be.

Watching a parent age in the home they've known for decades can stir up a storm of emotions—love, worry, guilt, hesitation. Maybe you've seen them struggle with everyday tasks. Maybe the house feels more like a burden than a comfort. Or maybe it's just a quiet, persistent feeling that something has to shift—but you're unsure how to bring it up without sounding like you're taking over.

Here's the thing: you don't have to figure it all out today.

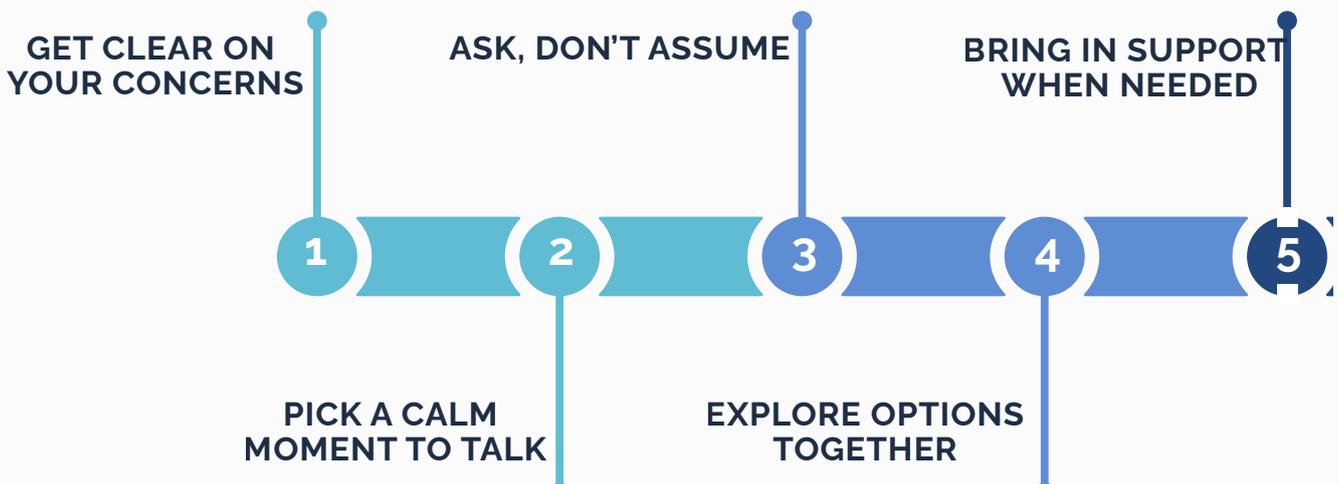
As someone who's walked this road—both personally and professionally—I created this guide to help you take that **first meaningful step**.

This isn't a manual for moving your parent out. It's a compassionate framework for starting a conversation with them—built on empathy, honesty, and mutual respect. There are no scripts here, no ultimatums—just thoughtful guidance to help you open the door to one of life's most important (and often most tender) talks.

So, let's take a breath—and start this journey together.

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## YOUR ROADMAP TO SUCCESS





# GET CLEAR ON WHAT'S WORRYING YOU

## *Before you speak, check in with yourself*

When we're worried, it's easy to shift into fix-it mode. But clarity before conversation makes everything smoother—and helps you stay grounded when emotions rise.

This isn't about pushing an agenda. It's about understanding your concerns so you can approach the conversation with compassion and confidence.

### **Ask Yourself:**

- What specifically have I seen or sensed that's made me uncomfortable.
- Is this about safety, loneliness, health decline, emotional burnout- or something else?
- Have things changed recently in a way that feels new or urgent?

### **Then Ask:**

- What role am I stepping into here? Am I leading? Supporting? Just checking in?
- What would feel like a healthy outcome for both of us—something we could live with, not just agree to?

### **Try This:**

Take five quiet minutes and scribble down your thoughts on these questions:

- What's honestly worrying me?
- If I were them, how would I want this brought up?
- No overthinking. Just honesty. It doesn't have to be pretty - just real.



## PICK A CALM TIME TO TALK

### *Because timing can change everything*

These conversations aren't made for passing moments. You don't want to bring it up while unloading groceries or during a holiday dinner. Choose a time that allows space—physically and emotionally.

Think of it as setting the stage for connection, not confrontation.

#### **Good Times Might Be:**

- A relaxed weekend afternoon
- A quiet drive (windows down, no radio—somehow that helps)
- After coffee or a light lunch, where everyone is settled

Avoid stressful or emotionally loaded times—like doctor visits, crowded family events, or right after the Bengals lose (seriously, don't).

#### **How to Ease Into It:**

- Hey, I've been thinking about how things are going at home lately. Could we find a time to talk about it?"
- "I care about you a lot, and I just want to make sure you're feeling okay—mind if we talk about that sometime soon?"
- No big conversation right now—I just want to check in soon when we're both feeling good."

**Gentle is better than grand. Your inviting, not intervening.**

# 3 LET CURIOSITY LEAD

## *Don't Assume... Ask.*

Even when it seems obvious what needs to happen, remember: your parent's lived a whole life making decisions for themselves. Respecting that history is the foundation of trust.

Instead of jumping in with, "You should think about moving," try a softer route. Let curiosity do the heavy lifting.

Try Asking:

- "Is anything around the house starting to feel like a hassle?"
- "Have you thought about what you'd want to do, if staying here ever felt like to much?"
- "What does a comfortable day at home look like now? Like.. what's working and what just kind of exhausting?"

Their answers might surprise you. Honestly, they might surprise them, too.

**This isn't about leading the conversation—it's about giving them the space to reflect.**



## SCRIPTS

Gentle, real-world phrases to help you start — and continue — the conversations that matter.

# “ — GENTLE WAYS TO BEGIN THE CONVERSATION

**Can we talk about how things have been feeling for you lately?**

A soft, open invitation that doesn't assume anything is wrong

**I've noticed a few things around the house, and I wanted to check in. How are you feeling day-to-day?**

This keeps the focus on their experience.

**I care about you, and I want to make sure you're comfortable and safe. Can we chat about that sometime soon?**

Warm, loving, not urgent

**Nothing has to change right now — I just want to understand how you're feeling**

Reduces defensiveness.





## WHEN SAFETY IS THE CONCERN

(Without sounding controlling)

**I know your independence matters to you. That's why I worry — I want to help you keep it as long as possible.**

Affirms dignity + opens the door

**I've noticed a couple things that made me concerned for your safety. Can we look at them together?**

Invites collaboration

**Would you be open to exploring a few small changes that might make life easier?"**

Positions solutions as ease, not loss

**Nothing has to change right now — I just want to understand how you're feeling**

Reduces defensiveness.



## WHEN YOUR PARENT IS RESISTANT

**I hear you — this is a lot to take in. Can we take this one piece at a time?**

Validates feelings; slows things down

**What part of this feels hardest for you?**

Encourages self-reflection rather than shutdown.

**I'm not trying to take over. I'm trying to help us make decisions before something forces our hand.**

Reframes proactive planning.

**If you don't like anything we look at, we don't have to choose it. I just want us to know the options.**

Takes pressure off.



## WHEN EMOTIONS RUN HIGH

**It's okay that this feels emotional. This is a big conversation for all of us.**

Normalizes their reaction

**Let's take a breath. We're on the same team**

Grounds both people.

**We don't have to fix everything today. Let's just stay connected.**

Keeps the relationship at the center.

**Can we revisit this after we've had some time to think?**

Allows space without shutting down dialogue.



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## WHEN YOU NEED TO REVISIT THE TOPIC LATER

**I've been thinking about our conversation. Can we pick it up again sometime soon?**

Gentle and persistent.

**I want to make sure we're planning ahead, not reacting in a crisis. Can we take another look together?**

Reframes the purpose.

**What would feel like a small next step for you?**

Promotes agency.

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## SCRIPTS THAT EMPOWER — NOT PUSH

**You are always in the driver's seat here. I'm here to support you however you want**

Keeps the door open.

**This is your life — I want to honor what matters most to you**

Security + dignity.

**My goal is to help you stay as safe, comfortable, and independent as possible**

Affirms shared goals.

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## EXPLORE WHAT'S POSSIBLE- TOGETHER

*It's not about making decisions today,  
It's about imagining together.*

Once that door opens, keep things low-pressure. This isn't a "now or never" moment—it's more like, "Let's see what's out there."

You're not mapping a plan. You're just taking a look around together, with no commitment.

### Consider These Possibilities:

- Touring some one-level or smaller homes. (open houses are a great opportunity to do this)
- Exploring senior living communities (even if just online)
- Talking to a home care provider about part-time help.
- Reframing "downsizing" as "right-sizing"- its not about less, it's about what fits.

### Try Phrasing It Like:

- "No pressure. Let's just check some things out together."
- "We don't need to figure anything out today—I just want to see what's even possible."
- "Honestly? You're in charge. I'm just here to help if you want it."

Empowerment goes a long way. Nobody likes to feel backed into a corner. This is more like turning on a light in a dim room.



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## DONT BE AFRAID TO BRING IN HELP

*At some point, it's going to be more than a two-person job.*

Even the best families hit a wall. Emotions run high. Logistics get confusing. And, let's be honest, sometimes it's just plain overwhelming.

That's when outside support changes everything. You're not weak for calling in help—you're wise.

### **The Right People Can Include:**

- A Certified Senior Housing Professional/Realtor (that's me)
- A financial advisor or elder law attorney
- A senior move manager who lives for sorting and organizing
- A therapist or coach who helps with tough transitions

### **Here's a low-pressure way to offer it:**

"I came across someone who helps families figure this stuff out. No strings—I just thought it might be nice to hear what they have to say."

Sometimes, it's just easier hearing it from someone outside the family.





## FINAL THOUGHTS

This isn't going to go perfectly. It's not supposed to.

It might feel awkward, or a little clunky. You might say the wrong thing—or nothing at all the first few tries. That's okay.

The fact that you're even thinking about this? That you care enough to start? That's the real work.

Just keep showing up—even if it's messy, or late, or a little too emotional. Because in the end, it's not about solving everything. It's about being there when it counts.

And that? That matters more than anything.

# ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Hi, I'm Regan Van Kerckhove—a Certified Senior Housing Professional (CSHP), award-winning Realtor, and the founder of DwellWise Cincinnati.

I help adults 50+ and their families navigate real estate transitions with clarity, compassion, and confidence. But this work isn't just professional for me—it's deeply personal.

Several years ago, I was caring for my dad while raising three young kids. I was an only child trying to juggle everything—family, work, life—and I remember feeling like I had no roadmap for what came next. One afternoon, after not seeing my dad for a while, I stopped by his house... and everything changed.

I walked in and immediately knew something was off. Papers were scattered across every surface. Dishes had piled up in the sink. The fridge was packed with expired food. Or maybe it was the smell that got to me first—I honestly don't remember. But what I do remember is how loud the silence felt. It was clear he wasn't just tired—he was overwhelmed. He couldn't keep up anymore.

That day shook me. And it became the turning point that shaped the work I do now.

Today, I help families facing similar moments—moments that feel heavy, uncertain, and emotional. My job isn't just about selling homes. It's about guiding people through one of life's hardest transitions with empathy and a clear plan.

If you're walking this path, you're not alone. I'm here when you're ready.

I offer free, no-pressure consultations. Whether you're exploring options for yourself or a loved one, we'll take it one step at a time- together.

*Regan*



## Big changes start with small conversations.

If this guide resonated with you, or if you're feeling unsure about the next step, that's okay. Just reach out.

You don't need to have the answers. You just need someone who knows how to help you find them.

I'm here when you're ready.

## Connect with Regan

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