



Driving



It's not easy to talk to an older adult about taking the keys away. Here are some suggestions to help you navigate this potentially complex and emotional conversation.

Driving is one of our greatest expressions of independence. But for many older adults, there comes a time when age-related conditions make it impossible to drive safely.

Consider the other person's point of view

- Approach the topic from a place of respect and concern, and acknowledge that this transition is very difficult. Make sure the conversation doesn't feel like an intervention. Instead of pointing to all the reasons they are unsafe to drive, explain that you share the same goals: to bolster their independence and keep them safe.

Discuss alternative transportation

- To ensure your loved one can remain active in their community, help them make a plan for alternative types of transportation, like carpools. Ride-sharing programs like Lyft or Uber can be easy and cost-effective, and may help your parent feel that by summoning a ride, they're still in control.
- If your concerns about your loved one's driving are related to memory loss, work to deter their driving one trip at a time, rather than having the "big talk," which may be forgotten or cause resentment later.

Give it time

- Allow enough time to process the emotions associated with this transition. Validate your loved one's frustration by agreeing that the situation is challenging. They're unlikely to decide to stop driving after one conversation, so be prepared to continue the discussion over time. In some cases, blaming external factors—such as other distracted drivers or difficulty finding parking—might help your loved one understand your concerns about their safety.

Seek support

- A professional can help explain the risks of driving and suggest alternatives. Seniors At Home Care Managers are experts at facilitating these kinds of conversations. Our Center for Dementia Care social workers are also available to help you develop an individualized plan.

To schedule a dementia care consultation email dementiacare@jfcs.org or call 415-449-3712

Seniors At Home is a division of Jewish Family and Children's Services • San Francisco • Peninsula • Marin • Sonoma County