

Conversations for Caring: 10 Caring Points

Topic: ***Working with Families in Challenging Situations***

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1. Families are systems – like a mobile, when one member moves, all are affected ... or like birds on a wire, when one flies off, everyone else adjusts.
2. Families have their own roles and rules – spoken or unspoken - and a distance of miles or years frequently does not change them.
3. Families passing through challenging situations can become more rigid, but roles and rules can also become more fluid in crises – creating space and opportunity.
4. How to begin a conversation with a family in crisis: *How can I help? Can you help me understand what has happened?*
5. How to support families in challenging situations or with significant “baggage” to make important decisions: *How has your family made decisions the past? What is the specific decision that needs to be made? By when does the decision need to be made?* Creating and maintaining a sense of focus and perspective can lessen the overwhelming nature of the work the family needs to do together.
6. “Being with” the family as a caring and non-anxious presence is a deep support.
7. Supporting adult children trying to help parents in need: *What are the actual needs – medical/health/safety, housing, financial, cognitive, level of independence? How to understand parent’s resistance – loss, changing parent/child roles, generational differences, shame, expectations of parents about children’s care?*
8. Supporting adult children with strategies for responding to parental resistance: *Stressing desire to assist parent maintain independence. Willingness to negotiate. Having a sensitivity of the parent’s experience – loss of control and self-esteem.*
9. Additional communication strategies for adult children supporting elder parents: *Listen deeply. Don’t rush conversation or create “fire drill.” Present questions in ways that offer options and choices. Keep it simple – one issue at a time. Be patient and gracious.*
10. Faith communities are wonderful spaces where aging as a natural process can be addressed proactively through educational and other programs - in a manner that is affirming, supportive, and genuine.



*These 10 Caring Points are intended to be a summary of best practices.
For citations, references, and additional information,
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