

Do Have That Talk About Aging

There is one thing you can do for your well-being that has nothing to do with diet, exercise or doctor visits. And that is to have a conversation with your loved ones about getting older. This matter can apply whether you are the person getting older or you are the child or spouse of that person, says Deb Logan, Executive Director of the Blue Zones Project, Southwest Florida.

"It's for your peace of mind, whichever side of the conversation you are on," Logan says. "It's a win-win proposition. But it can be an uncomfortable thing to talk about. And the longer we wait, the more uncomfortable it gets."

What topics are we thinking of for this conversation? Things like your preferences if you get sick, whether you have a living will, plans for after your death, whether you have a safety deposit box and where the box is. Everyone's conversation will be slightly different.

HOW TO START

You may find it helpful to use this article as a jumping-off point and say, "I read an article about this, and I hear it's good for our well-being. Just like we talked about when I (or you) went away to college or got married, can we talk about this transition time?" Another strategy is to ask about whether your loved one has done any planning for himself or

herself, and say that you are thinking about doing some planning yourself.

A lot of fear certainly can be attached to the idea of coming to the end of life—again, on both sides. But the person you are talking with may be relieved that you

says. "It's really a part of worst-case-scenario planning. We all know there is premature loss of life. Accidents happen. Someone in the family could get a bad diagnosis, and then your life goes into a tailspin; your brain goes into a fog.

If you had had conversations beforehand, it would make that situation a bit easier and much less stressful."

A GOOD CHECKLIST

If you're looking for further help in structuring your conversation, Logan recommends visiting www.aarp.org and heading to the website's "Prepare to Care" guide, which you can download and print. The guide will walk you through each step of the process and give you a template to work with. "You can think of filling it

out on a 'just in case' basis," Logan says. "You don't have to feel like you're going to need it imminently. Do make sure that your loved ones know where to find your copy when you're finished."

Logan adds that having the document can reduce the stress of having to think of everything and trying to guess what your loved one would have wanted. "If you've ever gone through a situation where you've lost someone, or someone was incapacitated in a significant way," she says, "you'll understand how important it is for the people left behind to have some help with their decisions." **NH**



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want to know his or her plans. Carrying around this information on one's own can be a burden.

When is a good time to have this discussion? "It's never too early," Logan