Five Ways to Talk with Your Loved One About End-of-Life Issues

Keep it light.

Have this talk at a time that is not serious. Try to make it a fun experience. Reserve a private dining room in a restaurant or videotape it, like filming a family movie.

Immediate family only.

Limiting this type of meeting to immediate family members is often more efficient. The group will be smaller, your parent will likely be delighted to spend time with just his or her children, and will be more open to the discussion.

Don't make it an intervention.

Think about how you would like to be approached with such matters. Maybe start by sharing a story of another family in a similar situation or produce your own pre-planning checklist and talk about how you are "getting your affairs in order."

Make good use of a holiday gathering.

This may be when all family members are present and, therefore, a good opportunity to devote some of the time to discussing these details. Perhaps the oldest sibling could initiate the conversation, but no sibling should be left out.

Limit initial expectations.

Even though a talk about end-of-life issues may have been on your mind for a while, it might not be top-of-mind for your parent. Allow your parent to process the proposals and maintain as much dignity and independence as possible. It might be easier than you imagine.

From Jo Myers, author of *Good to Go — The ABCs of Death and Dying* (The Ultimate Planning Guide for Baby Boomers and Their Parents). For more information: www.GoodToGoTheBook.com. For her book, Jo interviewed 30 professionals and Baby Boomers about end-of-life issues. *Good to Go* is her personal story with appropriate humor and professional advice about pre-planning for death.