

What you need to know about caring for your aging parent - and for yourself.

- Having that uncomfortable conversation with your parents and siblings BEFORE anything happens is ideal. If you are able to converse with your parent now - do it!
- You are not alone. In the United States, as of 2015, there were 43.5 million adult children caring for their senior parent.
- Before you make a decision, make sure you have all of the information - like asking what your parent wants (if they are able to answer), gathering financial, legal and health information.
- It's okay not to know exactly what to do.
- Sometimes you have to go with your gut and make the decision and follow through even though your loved one disagrees.
- Your energy. Your parent can feel it. If you are stressed, overwhelmed, angry. Try some deep breathing or whatever you can to try and shift your energy when you are around your parent. When they sense that you are at ease, they will be as well.

- Role reversal, being in charge, making decisions are muscles you have to build up.
- It takes a village to care for your parent. Ask for support.
- I've learned that being able to harness my feelings and at the same time being genuine with my mom is helpful because I've learned how much of what I'm feeling I can show her AND also I can be genuine to a point with her. It is a balancing act. You are going to become the best tightrope walker ever.
- Take time for yourself - even if it's losing yourself in Netflix for 10 minutes or simply sitting outside for some fresh air to clear your mind of the head trash that you are experiencing so that you can make clear decisions for your parent, for yourself and be in the moment that you spend with your parents.
- You will want to run away. To not adult. Do it. Shortly after we moved my mom into her apartment in the retirement community, we took a quick trip to Hershey, Pennsylvania. We needed it. Mom was safe, I communicated with her quite often and honestly she was keeping herself busy getting acquainted with her new surroundings. We came back with a new perspective and fresh energy. So if you feel like running away, do it.
- Speed bumps happen frequently. Expect them. That is the norm for caring for your elderly parent. Out of the blue, you have to deal with some situation. These speed bumps used to take me by surprise and ruin my day. Once I started to expect them, to some degree, I was better able to deal with it.

- The secret that no one tells you - “they” say you have to be the one to care for your parent in your own home. “They” also say that you should place your parent into a retirement community. Let me tell you the truth.....there is no right or wrong way to care for your parent. There is only what is right for your parent, for you and for your family. The truth is that as long as your parent is comfortable and safe, that is the “right” answer.