

## **Ten Tips for Speaking to Aging Parents about Surrendering Driving Privileges\***

The recent rash of accidents involving older drivers has led to increased concerns among family members who are asking how to address their worry and concern with their parent.

Fifteen percent of licensed drivers are over 65 years old. Most of them are safe drivers and have developed techniques to compensate for the physical and cognitive changes that can impact driving. These include a slower reaction time, changes in vision and/or hearing or medical problems/treatments that impact alertness and focusing ability. It is not an all or nothing decision. Some older drivers are assessed and found to be capable to drive during the day or with certain restrictions.

The following tips may help initiate the potentially painful conversation with a parent when you have concerns that they may no longer be as safe behind the wheel.

### **Ten Tips on Speaking to Aging Parents about Surrendering Driving Privileges**

1. Bring up one of the highly publicized accident cases or the proposed legislation for mandatory retesting and ask them their thoughts on the topic. Sometimes it is easier to have this initial discussion in the abstract.
2. Avoid a confrontation about why you believe they should stop or limit driving. Rather, express your worry and concern using “I” messages such as, “I really worry about you when you say you are driving somewhere. Your car has lots of scrapes and dings and I am afraid you might get hurt or hurt someone else which I know you would never want to do.”
3. Involve other people who have information about their ability to continue driving. This might include a partner, children, adult grandchildren, and/or neighbors.
4. Acknowledge the life changes that will occur if they curtail or cease driving and come prepared with some alternative transportation ideas including city and state funded transportation options, taxi vouchers and your and/or other family members’ willingness to help out.
5. Help your parent calculate the cost of running their car for a year. Make sure to include all costs from registration and insurance to gasoline and car washes. Explore what alternative transportation options would cost versus driving on their usual outings.
6. Ask to go along to a doctor’s appointment to discuss the impact of any medical conditions or medications on their driving ability.

7. Be supportive of any voluntary changes your parent has made to compensate for declining abilities. If they no longer drive at night, be supportive and offer a ride to functions that end after dark.
8. Any accident, even if they were not at fault, is an opportunity to express your concern for their safety and ability to drive defensively.
9. Offer to arrange for and maybe even pay for a driving assessment. Promise to abide by their recommendations if they allow you to participate in the assessment review.
10. Remain calm and focused on concern for your parent's well-being and others' safety. Recognize that this can be very hard for you to say and for your parent to hear and can lead to sadness or depression.

There are many resources available to help with this difficult transition. If your parent persistently refuses to stop driving or have an assessment and you believe them to be a hazard behind the wheel, contact the Registry of Motor Vehicles and ask for their help.

For more advice and guidance on how to speak to your senior, Jewish Family and Children's Services (JF&CS) of Boston offers a comprehensive service called *Your Elder Experts*. The program's Geriatric Care Managers expertly guide older adults and their families, whether through a crisis or in planning for the future. They advocate for appropriate and thorough medical care, educate families about resources and support their clients through the transitions of aging. For more information on Your Elder Experts please visit <http://www.yourelderexperts.com/> or call 781-693-5052.

\*Article copied from the Elder Experts website.