

Preparing for a Difficult Family Conversation

A gentle preparation checklist

1. Clarify Your Intention

- I am clear on why I want to have this conversation
- I know what I hope will change as a result
- I am open to outcomes other than agreement

2. Ground the Conversation in Observations

- I can describe specific things I have noticed
- I am prepared to avoid blame or assumptions
- I can speak in concrete examples rather than conclusions

3. Anticipate Different Reactions

- I expect emotions to vary between people
- I am prepared for resistance or hesitation
- I accept that not everyone may respond immediately

4. Choose the Right Moment

- The timing allows for a calm discussion
- There is space for follow-up conversations
- The conversation is not happening during a crisis

5. Keep the Focus Shared

- I can name our shared concern for our parent
- I am ready to listen as much as I speak
- I will avoid positioning myself as the decision-maker

6. Protect Yourself

- I am aware of my emotional limits

- I have support available after the conversation
- I am willing to pause if things become overwhelming

7. Decide One Next Step

- Continue the conversation later
- Share information with another family member
- Seek professional guidance
- Take time to reflect before acting

A difficult conversation does not need to resolve everything at once. Approaching it with care and clarity can reduce harm and open the door to future understanding.