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YOUR HARD CONVERSATIONS GUIDE · NOVEMBER 8, 2026

Sample: Talking with Margaret: your Hard Conversations Guide

Practical, respectful ways to talk about changing needs, at a pace that works for you both.

YOUR APPROACH: OPENING THE CONVERSATION

You told us: I haven't raised these concerns yet.

- Choose an easy opening: it doesn't have to be the hardest topic first.
- Start with curiosity: ask how things are going before sharing any worries.
- Ask about Margaret's own priorities: what matters most to them about how they live.
- Avoid an overwhelming list of concerns. One is plenty for a first conversation.

Your concern: Safety at home (your most recent top priority)

Understanding the conversation

Talking about changing needs is hard for most families. It touches on independence, privacy and pride, for Margaret and for you.

The aim isn't to win an argument or make a decision for Margaret. It's to understand what Margaret wants, share what you've noticed, and find next steps together.

Most important conversations happen over several talks, not one. A calm first conversation is a success, even if nothing is decided.

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Before you talk

- [ ] Choose one concern to start with (yours is below).
- [ ] Write down what you've noticed, as plain facts, not conclusions.
- [ ] Think about what matters most to Margaret: what they'd want to keep doing.
- [ ] Pick a calm time and a private place, with no rush.
- [ ] Decide what you'll say if it doesn't go well, so you can pause kindly.
- [ ] Pick one gentle way in (a question, not a concern).
- [ ] Expect it to take more than one conversation; that's normal.

Opening the conversation

Use your own words. These are starting points:

> "How are you finding things around the house these days?"

> "What matters most to you about how you live, now and down the road?"

Raising your concern: safety at home

Small changes at home, like better lighting or clearer walkways, can help Margaret stay independent for longer.

Start with something you've noticed, said neutrally:

> "I noticed the hallway was quite dark when I was leaving the other night."

Then, for example:

> "Would you be open to walking through the house together and seeing if anything could be easier or safer? We don't have to change anything you don't want to."

> "If there was one thing at home that's become a bit of a nuisance, what would it be?"

Questions that help Margaret lead:

- What parts of the house feel harder to get around than they used to?
- Is there anything you'd like help with, like changing bulbs or moving things within reach?

Asking without taking away independence

- Ask, don't tell: “What would help?” works better than “You need to…”
- Offer choices, and let Margaret decide between them.
- Suggest trying something for a short time, with a chance to change your minds.
- Focus on what Margaret wants to keep doing, and how the change helps with that.
- Respect Margaret's right to make their own decisions, including ones you wouldn't make.

If Margaret disagrees

- Stay calm, and thank them for being honest about how they feel.
- Ask what worries them about the idea. Often the real concern is something else.
- Don't push for a decision. Say you'll think about it too, and come back to it.
- Offer a smaller first step, or a short trial.
- Remember it's Margaret's decision. If you're worried about safety or about Margaret's ability to make decisions, talk to Margaret's doctor, rather than deciding for them.

Involving family

- Agree who will follow up on this conversation, and when.
- Share updates in one place, such as a group chat, so everyone hears the same thing at the same time.
- Record decisions in writing, to avoid confusion and doubled-up work.
- Respect Margaret's preferences about what's shared and with whom.
- If sharing the load has been uneven or tense, hold a short family meeting first, with an agenda focused on what Margaret needs, not past disagreements.
- Give each person a specific, regular task. People who live far away can still help with calls, research or paperwork.

Afterwards

- Afterwards, write down what was said and anything agreed.
- Do what you said you'd do, so Margaret sees the conversation led somewhere good.
- Set a time to check in again, and keep it light.
- Because Margaret lives alone, agree how often you'll be in touch.
- For health concerns, suggest Margaret talks to their doctor; you can offer to go along. For advice any time, call Health811 (dial 811).

More example scripts

> "I wanted to check in about how things have been going at home. Are there any everyday things that have become more difficult lately?"

> "I know staying independent is important to you. I'd like to understand what would make things easier without taking away the things you enjoy doing."

> "Would you be open to looking at a few options together? We don't have to decide anything today."

> "Could we talk about what would happen if you needed a little more help unexpectedly?"

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FILL IN BEFORE YOU TALK

Conversation preparation worksheet

Type into the boxes on a computer, or print this page and write by hand.

The one thing I want to talk about

What I've noticed (plain facts)

What matters most to Margaret

My opening line

One small step I could suggest

When and where we'll talk

If it doesn't go well, I'll say

Who else should know, and who will follow up

Date to check in again

Want the whole picture? A Personalized Family Plan ($199) covers all six areas of Margaret's life, with who does what, by when, reviewed by a care navigator: senestro.ca/pricing

This guide is practical help for talking with Margaret. It isn't therapy, mediation, legal advice or an assessment of anyone's ability to make decisions. For health concerns, speak with a healthcare professional. If anyone is in immediate danger, call 911.