

The DAILY PLAN-ITTM

Help clients have 'the talk' with elderly parents

It's one of the most uncomfortable topics your clients face, and one of the most important - discussing their parents' financial situation.

In many ways, it's easier for parents to talk about the "birds and the bees" with their own kids than it is to talk with their elderly parents about money. The latter conversations turn the tables on the traditional parent-child order, says [USA Today](#), and concerns about trust, independence and mortality add to the dynamic.

Material matters

By one estimate cited by *USA Today*, scams and elder abuse cost Americans more than \$36 billion a year. Encourage your clients to talk with their parents about how to spot and avoid scams that can wipe out their life savings. Scammers might come in the form of phone calls, direct mail or that new neighbor who seems just a little too friendly.

By having a conversation, your clients' parents can develop steps to take to avoid being defrauded and what to do if it happens.

According to *USA Today*, nearly one-third of parents older than 60 say they've never discussed later-life needs with their family. These issues include end-of-life directives and funeral plans, inheritance and beneficiaries, power of attorney, and even where important documents are kept.

Independence day

Aging parents don't like to acknowledge that they might need help as their physical health declines, says [PBS News Hour](#). Losing their independence is a real worry that scares many seniors. They've been making their own decisions for decades, and it's hard and sometimes impossible for them to give up control.

But it's not just your clients' parents who are hesitant to have these important talks. It can be difficult for your clients, too, because they don't want to seem greedy, as if they're only having these discussions to get to their parents' money.

Eighty-five percent of long-term care decisions are made when a medical crisis arises - and about 70 percent of seniors need some form of long-term care, according to *PBS News Hour*.

If your clients haven't talked with their parents, decisions are made on the fly with the real possibility of care being delayed, things being overlooked, things being forgotten - all of which have financial risks associated.

A little tenderness

Your clients need to **understand their feelings** before inviting their parents to talk. Just because they know they need to talk about these issues doesn't make it any easier to get into the nuts and bolts of the conversation.

Processing their feelings can help clients lessen their anxiety over having a financial dialogue with parents. Expressing how difficult the discussions might be may also help your clients put their parents at ease. Clients should tell parents that they are talking to them about these issues out of love and respect.

Here are some additional tips for handling these conversations:

- When sharing concerns with their parents, your clients need to **be specific**. If your clients show loving concern and are specific about the cause of their concerns, the parent is more likely to understand.
- The conversation should **be brief**. Asking one or two questions at a time is better than bombarding their parent with inquiries, and it's more beneficial to have three 30-minute talks than one 90-minute conversation. Keeping it short helps everyone focus on one discussion item at a time, and it helps keep emotions from getting out of control.
- Your clients need to **let the parents lead** whenever possible. This lets the parents know that your clients are there to support them, and not to take over every aspect of their lives.
- Finally, your clients need to go into these conversations knowing they'll need to **talk about this regularly**. One conversation isn't going to put everything neatly into place. As time passes, new concerns may arise that demand attention. Help your clients make progress, one conversation at a time.

We hope this information is useful to you and helps your client and their families. If you have a specific case or question, please don't hesitate to call our office.

No portion of this newsletter may be reused in any way without prior express written consent.