

TEN TIPS FOR SPEAKING TO AGING PARENTS ABOUT SURRENDERING DRIVING PRIVILEGES

- Bring up one of the highly-publicized accidents 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.
- 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.”
- Involve other people in the conversation who also have information about their ability to continue driving. This might include a partner, children, adult grandchildren, and/or neighbors.
- Acknowledge the life changes that will occur if they curtail or cease driving and come prepared with some alternative transportation ideas: city and state-funded transportation options, taxi vouchers and your or other family members’ willingness to help out.
- 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 the cost of alternative transportation options versus driving on their usual outings.
- Ask to go along to a doctor’s appointment to discuss the impact of any medical conditions or medications on their driving ability.
- Be supportive of any voluntary changes your parent has already made to compensate for declining abilities. If they no longer drive at night, offer a ride to functions that end after dark.
- Any accident, even if they were not at fault, is an opportunity to express your concern for their safety and ability to drive defensively.
- 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.
- Stay calm and focused on your 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 personalized advice and guidance on how to have this conversation, consider consulting a Geriatric Care Manager. The care managers from Your Elder Experts can support you and your family through this difficult decision, and connect you to the best resources.