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How to Manage Family Dynamics for Long Term Care Planning

Long Term Care Family Discussions

It's time to focus on what really matters and make some important decisions for your family's future.

Discussions around long term care for your loved ones can be emotional and require managing family dynamics. By starting these talks early, you'll know what everyone's expectations are and be able to plan ahead. It's much harder to start planning when you're in the middle of a major life event that might require long term care. In addition, options also become limited at that point.

The following are suggestions to help you navigate these talks early and make some necessary decisions:

Include a Mediator

If family dynamics make it challenging to plan care for your loved one(s), include an unbiased and objective mediator in the conversation. This person could be a professional mediator, a family therapist, or a geriatric case worker. Treat this as a business meeting by creating an agenda and establishing ground rules, such as five minutes of uninterrupted speaking time per person.

Avoid Sensitive Topics

The time you allot to discussing long term care planning should be used for just that. Focus on major decisions that need to be made collectively and work on planning for necessary action steps in the future (meetings, doctor visits, etc.).

Communicate Through Email

If face-to-face conversations aren't possible or aren't productive, consider emailing your family member(s) instead. This will give you time to compose and edit your message before sending.

Establish Roles

When planning for future long term care needs, be direct and agree in advance on roles and responsibilities for various family members. This should include financial roles and responsibilities as well.

“I” versus “You”

When discussing personal feelings and experiences, it's helpful to state your own feelings and not assume you know someone else's. Use “I” instead of “You.” This can go a long way toward making sure no one feels accused or criticized, which in turn can make them feel defensive.

No matter how complex your family dynamics may be, it is possible to establish consensus and get everyone on the same page. These conversations can take days, weeks, or even months. So long as you have a plan in place, your family can have the confidence knowing their loved ones will always be taken care of.

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