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How to talk to Mum and Dad about getting a personal alarm

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As your parents get older, it's natural to worry about their safety. Whilst you know they would like to remain independent for as long as possible, you may have concerns about what they would do in the event of an accident or fall if no one was there to help them.

There are solutions such as personal alarms or in-home monitoring systems that offer you peace of mind that help is always available, however bringing up this topic with your loved ones can be tricky.

Even if your loved ones are fiercely independent and usually resistant to help, there are ways to talk to them about the benefits of having a personal alarm and lifestyle changes that can lead to a successful outcome.

We've put together a step-by-step guide with advice from Dr Soha Daru, an HCPC registered Counselling Psychologist, to help you talk to your loved ones about the benefits of having a personal alarm and making lifestyle changes to support confident, independent living.

1. Acknowledge the sensitivity of the conversation

Dr Soha Daru, who has over 16 years' experience, explains how the shift in dynamics make the conversation about care more difficult:



Dr Soha Daru
Counselling Psychologist

"Firstly, acknowledging the uncomfortable nature of these conversations without judgement is an important first step. The topic of elderly care can bring up all sorts of fears and anxieties for both adult children and their relatives. These fears and anxieties are perfectly normal and understandable."

"It can be difficult to see those who were in a position of authority, or who formerly cared for us, now being the ones who need care and support, and this is something that many people struggle to deal with emotionally."

2. Put yourself in their shoes



Imagine what it would feel like if your own children approached you and suggested that you needed a personal alarm to help you feel confident and safe. It's possible that you might feel a little defensive or concerned about losing your independence.

Dr Daru explains *"It can be useful to put ourselves in the shoes of the older loves ones who might already be experiencing a loss of certain abilities and perhaps a decrease in independence."*

"This shift in role dynamic, as well as the loss of independence, physical strength and general capacity can bring up all kinds of emotions such as sadness, grief and anger. It is important to acknowledge that these are completely valid feelings that most of us will experience at some point in life."

That's why it's important to approach the conversation with empathy and understanding. Let them know calmly that your goal is the same as theirs - to help them remain safely independent at home for as long as possible. Acknowledge that these conversations are difficult but necessary for their well-being and peace of mind.

3. Create a safe environment to have the conversation

Choose the right time to initiate the conversation in a comfortable and private setting, free from distractions.

Ensure it's a time when both you and your loved ones are calm and not rushed. Avoid bringing up the topic during stressful times or when emotions are running high.

“ *Creating a safe environment is a crucial starting point to any productive discussion. Try to choose a time to have the conversation where both parties are fairly relaxed and there are no distractions.*

Listen to your loved one non-judgmentally and respect their needs and opinions, as this can go a long way in having a collaborative conversation.

Dr Soha Daru

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4. Use the right language to show that you are on their side

Dr Daru explains: “It’s really important to show your parents that you are on their side, rather than pushing your own agenda, as this will help them to open up to you.”

“ *For example, ask them what they might have already thought about their elderly care. This will then make it easier to discuss options for care together.*

Dr Soha Daru

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Try to express your thoughts and feelings with ‘I’ statements, as this avoids any blaming language which could make a person defensive. Focus on your own concerns and feelings about your parent, rather than challenging their behaviour. For example, “I’m worried about how you would cope if you had a fall whilst you are out in the garden” is a much better way to phrase your concerns than something accusational like “you wouldn’t know what to do if you had a fall whilst you’re on your own in the garden”.

5. Ask questions to reach an understanding

It's important to approach the conversation with your loved ones about getting an alarm with care. Instead of simply telling them that they need an alarm, it's better to start by asking them questions about their lifestyle and needs.

Try to understand what they value and what would help them to improve their quality of life. This can help you to understand what kind of alarm would be the best fit for their current lifestyle.

Make sure to listen carefully to their answers and take them into consideration. Sometimes, the resistance to getting a personal alarm is due to lack of awareness about personal alarms, their designs and features. The latest personal alarms are designed for people who are frequently on the go, with different wearable options and are suitable for outdoor activities.

6. Focus on the benefits and maintaining independence

Dr Daru says, *“Conversations around elderly care can sometimes feel as if older loved ones are losing their independence, so focus on explaining that having additional support can be freeing and actually enable this sense of independence.”*

“At the end of the day, the elderly have a right to choose how they want to live their lives, and being respectful of their choice should be the undertone of the conversation.”

Dr Soha Daru



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7. Explain the risks



According to guidance from Public Health England, people over 65 are at a higher risk of having a fall. Falls and fractures are a serious health issue and extremely expensive, both to the NHS and, more importantly, to the affected person.

Some older adults may never fully recover from a fall, leading to distress, pain, long-term injuries and loss of confidence. Studies show falls are the number one precipitating factor for a person losing independence and going into long-term care. Solutions such as personal alarms can ensure that if your loved one does fall, they can get help more quickly.

Discussing the statistics and facts about falls with your parent can help them understand the significance of getting help quickly. Explain the risks and how these make you feel.

“ *Personal alarms can reduce overall hospital admissions in older adults by 50% and reduce the length of a stay in hospital from 15 days to 8 days.*

Professor James Brown,
Aston Research Centre for Healthy Ageing

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8. Explore different options

Sometimes, your loved one might be resistant to using a personal alarm because they associate them with old-fashioned, bulky alarms worn by elderly people. They may have seen an unflattering advert depicting an elderly lady who has fallen at the foot of the stairs.

However, personal alarms have evolved, and there is now a range of stylish devices available. Sharing with your loved ones some of the more modern devices that have high-tech features such as GPS tracking, reminders and alerts, or step counters, might be enough to convince them.

Rather than dictating what you think is best, present various options and information. Discuss the pros and cons of each and encourage them to express their preferences. This approach helps them feel involved and respected in the decision-making process.

You can [download our product brochure](#) to look through together, so that your parent can see that there are discreet, stylish alarms available that match a variety of lifestyles. Additionally, you can compare personal alarm features online.



9. How can I offer reassurance when I can't always be there?



Our free [wellbeing call](#) service is a valuable extension of our 24-hour emergency resolution support. If a personal alarm is used in a way that differs from the user's normal pattern, our team is alerted. We will then make a quick call to a family contact to check everything is okay, and if we can't reach them, we will call the alarm user directly.

This simple, reassuring service helps families stay informed even when they can't be there in person. By monitoring changes in call

frequency, timing or behaviour, we can highlight potential concerns early, supporting health, safety and independence.



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Customers tell us it makes a real difference. 100% of family members surveyed said the wellbeing call gave them extra reassurance.

More than responding to emergencies, our wellbeing calls help us stay connected with customers, ensure our support remains the best it can be, and keep records up to date should an emergency occur.

10. Be patient and revisit the conversation

Dr Daru recommends being patient and having multiple conversations. She explains *“Sharing too much information in one go can leave people feeling overwhelmed; doing so in bite-sized chunks can be more effective.”*

“Empathise with your parent in a calm manner and exercise patience by having multiple conversations if needed.”

“It might also be helpful to prepare for the conversation in advance and share practical examples of how and where they might need elderly care based on their current situation.” Our parents are used to caring for us as children, so reversing this responsibility is complex emotionally. Patience and understanding is key.”

“ These discussions might not be resolved in one sitting or even in the short-term. Your loved ones may need time to process the information and consider their feelings. Be patient and open to revisiting the conversation later. ”

Why choose an alarm from Taking Care?

More than

49,900

emergencies resolved per year



20 seconds

average alarm call
answer time



1.1 million

alarm calls answered 24-hours a day



95%

of alarm calls resolved
without calling 999

We saved the **NHS**

£53 million+

Taking Care is the largest private provider of personal alarms in the UK. We have been providing alarm services for more than 30 years and have supported over ¼ million people and their families with personal alarms. There are no long-term contracts with our personal alarm service, and you can cancel at any time. We are the first Which? Approved personal alarm provider in the UK and are committed to the Which? code of conduct. We are regularly assessed to ensure we continue to meet the high standards of the Which? Consumer Association.

How to order a personal alarm

When you are ready to order, we are here to help. You can quickly and easily order online or download a brochure at www.taking.care.

If you would like to speak with an Independent Living Advisor, our telephone lines are open Monday – Friday, 9am – 6pm.

Call 0800 085 7371 or visit www.taking.care

As we get older, we should be able to continue doing the things we love and living life the way we want to. Our articles and guides are available to read online or delivered straight to your email inbox.

Visit www.taking.care/healthy-ageing for support and advice

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