A RESOURCE FOR ADULT CHILDREN IN HAMILTON

HELPING A PARENT DOWNSIZE IN HAMILTON

A Conversation Guide for Adult Children

For families talking with a parent about what comes next.

START WITH QUESTIONS.

LISTEN MORE THAN YOU TALK.

LET YOUR PARENT DECIDE.



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This guide provides general information only and is not legal, financial, tax or medical advice. Programs, rules and services change; confirm details for your situation with the appropriate professionals. Not intended to solicit clients already under contract with a brokerage.

SECTION 01

Why This Conversation Is Hard

This conversation is hard, and that's normal.

It isn't because your parent is being difficult. A move touches bigger things: grief, identity and the fear of losing control. Even the kindest question can stir up old feelings.

What looks like resistance is often protection

Your parent may be holding on to:

- Decades of memories tied to the house
- A sense of who they are that's tied to home
- Their say over their own life

Two ideas that help

Staying in control. Author David Solie (*How to Say It to Seniors*) describes two needs that shape later life: staying in control, and making sense of one's legacy. When a decision feels pushed on them, parents often dig in.

Ambiguous loss. Family therapist Pauline Boss coined the term "ambiguous loss" for a loss that's unclear and has no clean ending. It isn't her term for downsizing, but it helps explain why leaving a home can feel like grief before anything is gone.

START WITH NOW, NOT LATER

Often the best first conversation isn't about moving at all. It's about how your parent feels in the house today.

Your job isn't to fix the feeling or find perfect words. It's to listen, and to keep the conversation going.

Sources: David Solie, *How to Say It to Seniors: Closing the Communication Gap with Our Elders*. Pauline Boss, *Ambiguous Loss: Learning to Live with Unresolved Grief*.

SECTION 02

Before You Talk

A little preparation keeps the first conversation calm.

- **Get on the same page with your siblings.** Agree on what you're worried about and who will start the conversation. A parent who feels outnumbered, or hears a different message from each child, tends to shut down. Bring anyone who lives far away in by phone so no one is surprised later.
- **Pick a calm moment.** Avoid holiday dinners, conversations in front of the grandchildren, and the day after a fall or a scare, unless safety can't wait.
- **Be clear about your own reasons.** Are you worried about safety, the upkeep, or how much help you can give? Each is fair. Saying which one it is helps your parent trust the conversation.
- **Plan for more than one talk.** Many families need several conversations over weeks or months.
- **Remember that staying is an option too.** With some changes or help at home, staying can be the right answer. *Should I Stay or Downsize?* helps you weigh it.



SECTION 03

Five Conversation Starters

Lead with questions, not conclusions. These are for starting a conversation, not finishing one.

01 **“What’s been feeling easy at home lately, and what’s been feeling harder?”**
This brings out daily frustrations without jumping to solutions.

02 **“If you picture the next few years, what does a good day look like?”**
This looks ahead without focusing on leaving anything behind.

03 **“What do you most want your time and energy to go toward these days?”**
This shifts the focus from the house to quality of life.

04 **“Could we look at a few options together? No decisions today.”**
This keeps the choice with them.

05 **“Are there things about the house that feel more like a burden than a comfort?”**
This opens the door to honesty without blame.

WHAT OFTEN HELPS

Listening more than helping. Parents often open up once they stop feeling managed.

Starting with something they love. The garden, the kitchen table or the workshop can lead to a bigger conversation more easily than the house itself.

SECTION 04

Five Mindset Tips

These are for you, the adult child.

01 **Listen first.**
You're not there to win an argument. Let your parent feel heard, not steered.

02 **Let pauses happen.**
Your parent may be thinking it through.

03 **Offer, don't push.**
Put possibilities on the table and let your parent come to them in their own time.

04 **If feelings run high, slow down.**
Facts and timelines can wait for another day.

05 **Think in months, not one talk.**
Trust builds over several conversations.



SECTION 05

What to Say, and What to Avoid

Even with the best intentions, certain words can stir up resistance or sadness. These swaps help.

DO	DON'T
Lead with curiosity. *"How has the house been feeling for you lately?"*	**Lead with fixes.** *"You should sell this place before it gets worse."*
Invite, don't insist. *"Would you be open to looking at a few ideas together?"*	**Corner or rush.** *"We need to figure this out now."*
Respect that it's their decision. *"It's your decision. I want to help you make it with good information."*	**Override their choice.** *"You're not thinking clearly. Just let me handle it."*
Share how you feel. *"I care about you, and I want you to feel supported."*	**Use guilt.** *"I can't keep worrying about you like this."*
Start small. *"Could we just talk about what feels important right now?"*	**Make it all-or-nothing.** *"Either you move, or things are going to fall apart."*

Instead of this… try this

~~"It's time to move."~~	→	*"Have you thought about what might feel easier in the future?"*
~~"You've got too much stuff."~~	→	*"Are there things you feel ready to let go of, or that you don't use anymore?"*
~~"This house is too much for you."~~	→	*"What feels manageable these days, and what feels like more than it used to?"*

SECTION 06

Other Voices and Next Steps

Other voices

Sometimes the most helpful thing you can do is bring in someone your parent already trusts. Hearing it from them often lands better than hearing it from their children.

- **Their family doctor,** especially if you're worried about falls, memory, driving or managing at home. If safety is a real concern, involve the doctor sooner rather than later.
- **Their lawyer,** for wills and powers of attorney, ideally before a move is decided.
- **Their financial advisor or accountant,** to understand what a move would mean for their money.

Next steps, when they're ready

- Work through *Should I Stay or Downsize?* together. It's a calm way to look at the house, the costs and what they want next.
- Read the *Hamilton Downsizing Starter Guide* for an overview of the 3R Method™: Reflect, Relocate, Rejoice.
- Visit an option together, with no commitment.
- Start small with *Decluttering Your Home*, one room at a time.

HAPPY TO HELP, AT YOUR PACE

If it helps, I'm glad to talk with you first, before anyone talks to your parent. And if your parent would like to talk it through, I'm happy to sit down with them. No pressure, no listing talk.

Mike McCarthy, REALTOR® · Contact Mike →

SECTION 07

Local Support in Hamilton

City of Hamilton: Senior and Older Adult Resources

Programs, recreation and community resources for adults 55+.

Hamilton Council on Aging

A local charity working toward an age-friendly, dementia-friendly Hamilton.

Ontario Health atHome

Assesses and arranges home and community care, which can help someone stay at home safely. Anyone can call 310-2222 (no area code needed).

Hamilton Public Library Red Book

A searchable directory of local community services.

Details can change. Check with each organization directly.

WHERE TO GO NEXT

- **The 3R Method™** →
- **Should I Stay or Downsize?** →
- **Hamilton Downsizing Starter Guide** →
- **Decluttering Your Home** →
- **Hamilton Moving Guide** →
- **Contact Mike** →

CLOSING THOUGHT

There's no single right way to begin, and you don't have to get it perfect.

What matters most is that your parent feels respected, heard and supported, even if the conversation takes time. Keep showing up. Keep asking rather than telling.

It's their decision. Your role is to help them make it well, with good information and without pressure.



HELPING A PARENT DOWNSIZE IN HAMILTON

Whenever you're ready, I'm happy to listen.

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