

7 ESSENTIALS TO BEING YOUR OWN GENERATIONAL COACH

Welcome to the AgeWiseLiving teleseminar series.

I'm Barbara Friesner, the country's leading Generational Coach, author of The Ultimate Caregiver's Survival Guide, and expert on issues affecting seniors and their families.

My company is AgeWiseLiving which I started as the result of over 25 years of caregiving – first for my grandmother and now for my mother who has advanced dementia.

As a result of my personal experience, I started AgeWiseLiving and provide **1-on-1 Generational Coaching**, wrote The Ultimate Caregiver's Survival Guide, present an **8-week "How to be Your Own Generational Coach" program**, a **free monthly newsletter**, and a **free monthly teleseminar** like the one you're about to listen to, and much more.

Enjoy the teleseminar.

THERE ARE 7 ESSENTIAL STEPS TO BEING YOUR OWN GENERATIONAL COACH. I'm going to start by giving you the list and then I'll go back and go through each one individually.

1. DEFINE THE SITUATION & WHY ARE YOU CONCERNED
2. DETERMINE WHERE YOU NEED/WANT TO GO – YOUR GOALS FOR YOUR ELDERLY PARENT
3. ESTABLISH YOUR PRIORITIES
4. THINK ABOUT WHO YOUR ELDERLY PARENTS ARE
5. DETERMINE WHO CAN AND WILL HELP
6. FIND OUT WHAT YOUR ELDERLY PARENTS WANTS AND NEEDS
7. COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE

So let's take them 1 by 1:

Step # 1 is: **DEFINE THE SITUATION & WHY ARE YOU CONCERNED**

Some people are very clear about what's going on and why they're concerned.

If you're clear about the situation and why you're concerned – that's great! And you can move directly on to step 2!

For others, however, their concern may nothing more than a "feeling" – "I don't know why I'm concerned but I am!" If you're not clear, then it's important to stop and really think about it.

When potential clients call me, I do a complimentary get acquainted conversation and I ask the caller to tell me what's going on . . . what made you decide to call?" and I ask questions to help them clearly explain what is going on.

They tell me that just talking about the situation out loud helps them to get clear on the situation. So if you're not completely clear, it may help you to talk to others such as siblings and/or friends.

In fact, if you have siblings, it may help for you to tell them why you're concerned and then to have them tell you why they are. Sometimes it's exactly the same but other times they may come at it from a whole different angle – and both angles together helps both of you to get clear.

Or . . . for some people, it helps them to write it down – and if that works for you – go for it!

Now, a lot of people gloss over this part and then struggle where to go next so this is a very important step. So whatever method you use, be sure to use it!

So: step #1 is to define the situation and what about it concerns you.

Once you're clear on what's going on and why you're concerned, then Step # 2 is: **DETERMINE WHERE YOU NEED and WANT TO GO – YOUR GOALS FOR YOUR ELDERLY PARENTS.**

In other words, what are your NEEDS (your short-term goals) – what needs to be achieved, improved, or changed to resolve the current situation and what are your WANTS (your long-term goals) – how can you prevent a future crisis.

Once you've CLEARLY defined your goals, then step # 3 is **ESTABLISH YOUR PRIORITIES. What you need to do to resolve the current situation and what you will need to do to prevent a future crisis.**

In other words, list what it will take to achieve your goals. I find that it helps to brainstorm and just write down everything. Then go back and prioritize them – 1st your immediate (short-term) priorities and then your future (long-term) priorities.

For example

Let's say you decide it's not safe for your elderly parent to live alone any more.

Your immediate goals are for them to have in-home help and your long term goals are for them to move into an assisted living community.

So before getting in-home help,

✳ Make a list of what is needed including:

- ~ Days and times in-home help would be needed
- ~ What Level of care is needed (a companion, household and/or home maintenance, nurses aide – someone with medical training)
- ~ Determine how much money you and your family can afford to spend
- ~ Interview the various service providers
- ~ Etc.

Once that's in place, do the same with the long-term plan to find an assisted living community. Basically what you're doing is creating a to-do list in priority order and the more specific and detailed the list, the less time and aggravation you'll spend.

The next step, step #4, is to **THINK ABOUT WHO YOUR ELDERLY PARENTS ARE**

This may sound kind of odd but it's a really important step because you need to know where your elderly parent is coming from – their point of view – who they are generationally and who they are emotionally.

We usually don't spend any time thinking about that because it's human nature to think that everyone thinks the way you do – especially your parents. The fact is, they don't. And if you're not sensitive to where they're coming from generationally and emotionally, not only won't you be successful but you may end up in worse shape than when you started!

Very briefly, as Baby Boomers, our parent's generation are often called the "Depression Era" generation and, because of the Great Depression, money is very important to them. However, most of them were out of their formative years before the Great Depression. In fact, their formative years came at the end of the

Victorian era – which is why I call them “Vicky-D’s”. And it is the impact of the Victorian era that many Baby Boomers struggle with today.

For example:

VERY PRIVATE

* Didn't discuss personal things – especially not about money or health – with outsiders, OR the family (certainly not the children)

VERY PROUD

* May not ask for help or admit they need it – or be gracious about accepting it

VERY STRICTLY DEFINED MALE/FEMALE ROLES

WOMEN were homemakers and care providers

* Which means they usually feel strongly about home and caregiving & will resist giving up control of the home & taking care of their husbands.

MEN were the breadwinners and took care of the finances

* Therefore, usually feel strongly about financial issues and will resist talking about money and finances and will resist giving up control.

BOTH

* Expect daughters to be their care providers but often turn to sons for financial advice.

Now that can create friction between the siblings BUT IT ALSO MEANS your aging parents are more likely to talk with daughters about their health and more likely to talk with sons about money and finances – which may work to your advantage!

In addition:

Our aging parents are also going through a lot of really difficult things emotionally.

Very briefly:

Our elderly parents are facing major, life altering experiences. Things like:

- old age and illness
- death of friends/spouses
- possibility of having to moving out of home – into an assisted living community or a nursing home
- losing their independence and control over their lives
- dependency – or not having anyone to depend on

Serious, scary stuff!!

And when people are emotional, they revert back to who they are fundamentally so our elderly parents tend to be MORE private, MORE proud, and LESS willing to give up the things that are important to them such as control over their homes and finances.

So as you begin to get involved with your parent's eldercare, it's important to really think about where they are generationally and emotionally because it will help you focus on how they are looking at the situation and how you can best approach them.

With that in mind, the next step – step 5 – is to look at **WHO YOU CAN RELY ON FOR HELP TO APPROACH THEM**

The first place to look for help to approach your aging parents are your INTERNAL RESOURCES – your siblings and other family members such as your aunts and uncles because your elderly parents may be more willing to talk about their health and home care with a woman and more receptive to talking about money and finances with a man.

If you don't have siblings or other family members, look at your EXTERNAL RESOURCES. Perhaps your parents have a close friend who can help approach them or perhaps their lawyer, financial advisor, or a member of the clergy. Just remember that, because of their generational perspective not to spread your net too wide to people your elderly parent doesn't know.

The important thing to remember in this step is that you don't necessarily have to go it alone and you may not want to.

Everything we've talked about so far has been before you talk with your aging parents. So now let's talk about the next step – step # 6 is **FIND OUT WHAT YOUR AGING PARENT WANTS and NEEDS.**

What you do in this step depends on the situation and how urgent the issue is.

But here I'm not just talking about what they want as it relates to your goals but ALSO their emotional needs: their need for respect and caring and someone who will actually ask them what they want and someone who will really LISTEN to them!

That means letting them know that you're not going to treat them like a child and you're not going to take over their lives. That you're there to support them in every way you can is the most important message you can send – in both your words and your actions!

To do that is step # 7 **COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE, COMMUNICATE**

When you're talking with your elderly parent, remember that it's going to take a number of small conversations.

- Start with where they are and what **they** want – **and what they've done so far** – don't assume they've done nothing and now you're going to have to come in and fix everything. They may in fact have done nothing but you don't want to go into the conversation assuming that because it comes across making them wrong and maybe even make them feel stupid – which is not going to help the conversation!
- Let them ease into the conversation – which can be hard for Baby Boomers who tend to like to move in fast and all action – and even harder for men in general because men like to get right to the point. When you talk – especially with your mother, you will need to ease into the conversation with chit-chat
- Remember also that this is a very emotional time for them and they're very possibly freaked out by the situation – especially if it's a crisis – so you'll need to help them work through the emotion
- Also, discuss options – don't impose yours. For example: you might say something like: “Have you thought about what you can do to prevent this from happening again . . . ?”
- Maybe they have and maybe they haven't but allow them time to present their solutions before you present yours
- Help them see how the solution is to their advantage by showing them how the solution will help them get what they want

Most important thing to remember is that GOOD communication has to work both ways – talking *and* listening – and EFFECTIVE communication takes time.

So those are the 7 Essential Steps to being Your Own Generational Coach.

I want to thank all our listeners for joining us, learning more about these fascinating topics. Please give us your comments through the AgeWiseLiving website – www.AgeWiseLiving.com. This is Barbara Friesner saying good-bye.

If you have any questions about the services or programs offered at AgeWiseLiving, or if you'd like to schedule a complimentary Generational Coaching get-acquainted conversation with me, please call toll-free at (877) AGE-WISE. That's (877) 243-9473.