



Learner Objectives AgeWell

- Identify 2-3 barriers to tough conversations that cause them to be challenging, delayed and/or never held
- Demonstrate three tactics for starting tough conversations (getting started is often the most difficult part)
- Outline the SPIKE framework for holding effective tough conversations

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“There is no such thing
 as a worthless conversation,
 provided you know what to listen for.
 And questions are the breath of life
 for a conversation.”
James Nathan Miller

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Surprising Statistic AgeWell

- According to a survey of people 45 years and older, most Americans are more willing to discuss sex and drugs with their teenage children than have hard conversations with their elderly parents.



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The Tough Subjects AgeWell

- Is it time to take the keys away?
- Can my parents stay home alone?
- Should further treatment options be pursued?
- Time to move?
- What is their financial situation?
- When a family offers concern about your parent, how do you let them know?
- Senior sexuality
- Inappropriate behavior of a loved one in a care setting

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What Makes It Hard AgeWell

- Cultural/family beliefs
- Family member differences
- Personal experiences
- Sense of failure
- Denial
- Avoid upsetting others
- Hope
- Respect for parent's wishes
- Conversations are emotional and exhausting
- We react and respond in different ways



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Go for it now.
The future is promised to no one.

~Wayne Dyer

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Start the Conversation AgeWell


- Plant the seed
- Don't be afraid to raise the issue
- Take the elephant out of the room
- Share your concern of the person you are talking about
 - let them know you care



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Set A Goal AgeWell

- What are you trying to accomplish?
- Establish a plan
- And, a backup plan



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Prep for the Conversation *AgeWell*

- Be open to all options
- Remove your own bias and beliefs
- Hope for the best, plan for the worst
- Advocate for client
- Be objective
- Be realistic
- Be patient
- Do some research - check with team members about the person you are talking to – what kind of person are they? How do they typically communicate? Is there anything you should know before you start the conversation?

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Have the Tools In Place *AgeWell*

- S** – Setting
- P** – Perception
- I** – Invitation
- K** – Knowledge
- E** – Empathy
- S** – Strategy & Summary



- **SPIKES—A Six-Step Protocol for Delivering Bad News by Walter F. Baile, Robert Buckman, et al. – The Oncologist June 12, 2000*

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Setting *AgeWell*

- Mental rehearsal: prepare ahead, review plan and practice responses
- Be cautious of physical setting: sit somewhere comfortable and private without distraction
- Invite people you think should be present
- Sit down at eye-level
- Timing: Know their schedule and identify their best time of day

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Perception AgeWell

- Find out what the client knows already, what is their perception of how things are going
- Use this as an opportunity to correct misunderstandings and tailor information to what the client understands
- Explore whether the client is experiencing denial
- Identify any 'filters' that may shape a person's perception such as culture, background, life history/experience, etc.

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Invitation AgeWell

- State the purpose, intent and time frame
- Identify the goal: *"What are you hoping for?"*
- Find out what they know: *"How do you think things are going, what are you expecting?"*

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Knowledge AgeWell

- Clarify what is likely or unlikely to happen
- Review what you know: *"I understand that..."*
- Ask open ended questions
- Begin at the level of the client's comprehension and vocabulary
- Avoid excessive bluntness
- Ask them how they are doing through the conversation
- LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN



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More Knowledge AgeWell

- Identify long and short-term goals
- Set up informed choice: know about all the options and present them
- Focus on one goal at a time

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Emotions AgeWell

- Validate feelings and show concern:
 "I understand you are angry"
 "I understand that this is a scary thing to talk about"
 "I can see this is hard"
- Avoid saying: *"I know how you feel"*
- Encourage description of feelings – speak with compassion
- Validate their reactions and feelings
- Say less and listen more
- Ask questions


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Strategy & Summary AgeWell

- Share decision-making process with client – *people who have a clear plan for the future feel less anxious and uncertain*
- Recap the conversation
- Make sure to take the time to answer any questions
- Make sure they understand the information you talked about – expectations, hopes and fears and knowledge
- Review goals and time frames
- Follow up

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Case Studies *AgeWell*



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