

## Hard Conversation Worksheet:

Using “I See, I Think, I Feel, I Want” is one way to prepare for a tough conversation you may have to have with an elderly parent. Maybe you have to talk about a change in living arrangements or finances or health and these can be tricky conversations. Planning ahead of time can help you approach your parent with more confidence.

### Complete the Conversation Outline:

1. Describe the problem: Use descriptions that are basically factual. What is going on? Try to be specific.

**I See** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Based on what you see, what are your conclusions, thoughts, ideas about the matter? Be especially careful here not to make accusations or blaming statements:

**I Think** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Now, here is where you can state your feelings. Try to be specific (for example – don’t just say you are upset – but that you are worried and afraid for example). The words after “I feel” should be *feeling words* and not thoughts like “I feel you are doing this on purpose” (that is not a feeling – it is more like an accusation...a feeling word would be “I am *confused* about why you are doing it).

**I Feel** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. This is the “ask” or your chance to basically make a request if it applies. It can be simple like “I want to know what you think” or it can be complicated like “I want you to pay me back \$40 a week every Tuesday until your loan is paid off.” Be specific though. You don’t want to say “I want you to listen to me” – that may not mean the same thing to the person as it does to you. You would want to describe the specific actions that you need to see to show listening - like “I want you to look at me when I talk and answer my questions without my having to repeat myself.”

**I Want:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Example Statement:**

“Mom, I see that there are often dirty dishes in the sink and that you don’t seem to be making food for yourself. I think you may be having trouble cooking. I feel concerned that you are not getting enough to eat. I want to call Meals on Wheels and have them bring you lunch while I’m at work.”

**Think Ahead:**

Now, this part is just to prepare for and think about his or her response:

1. What is the likely emotional reaction?
2. What valid concerns might he or she have?
3. What unrealistic fears may be present?
4. What alternatives can we consider?
5. How would I feel if someone were telling me this?
6. How can I focus on the strengths of our relationship?
7. What positive and helpful things can I do, say, prepare, or consider that would make this work best for all involved?

NOTES:

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Once you have thought of likely outcomes and scenarios and feel that you understand your position and your parent’s position, you are ready to have the conversation. Set it up for a time you won’t be disrupted by others and for a when you will not feel rushed. Remember, if you are suggesting a major change in a person’s life or have bad news, it is normal for a person to have a defensive, sad, or fearful reaction. Patience is required to work through that. Don’t argue with the person’s view point or suggest that they “shouldn’t” feel a certain way. Just listen and accept and allow for whatever reaction is there. Acceptance will go a long way toward a resolution of the situation. Good Luck!



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