

**Caring for Your Loved One
Article #3**

**By Beverly Mishkin, LCSW
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Dear Geriatric Care Manager,

I am starting to get worried about my Dad. He is beginning to have cognitive deficits that are starting to impact on other areas of his life. During the past month he has been pulled over twice by the police for unsafe driving. I think that it is time for me to discuss with him that he should not drive anymore, but I am not sure how to begin the conversation.

Signed,
Worried daughter

Dear Worried Daughter,

The discussion with a loved one about unsafe driving and the cessation of driving can be very uncomfortable. To many older adults the ability to drive represents independence and choice. Someone who is still able to drive can schedule activities and appointments as they wish, and not have to rely on others for help with transportation. Having this tough discussion about driving concerns can also feel like a role reversal if it becomes necessary for a child to give instructions to a parent dealing with cognitive impairment. An individual who has dementia may not be able to accurately assess their driving skills. Of course as difficult and awkward as this conversation may feel, it is an important one to have. It is helpful to focus on health and safety during the conversation. You should research other transportation options and alternatives, and present these during the discussion. Many times the older adult will accept the doctor's words of concern about their driving ability more comfortably than when their family expresses their worries. There are agencies in our area that for a fee will do a comprehensive evaluation of an individual's driving skills. If your father has this type of assessment it may give you concrete evidence that his driving abilities are compromised, and you can present this to him as objective evidence that there is a problem. Good luck!