

Before You Say It Out Loud

A first step when you're worried about changes in your parent and afraid of what the doctor might say.

KYLIE GOLDMAN, MSW · MORE THAN 12 YEARS OF CLINICAL PRACTICE WITH FAMILIES

You've noticed something. You're not sure what it means.

Maybe you've kept it to yourself. Maybe you've mentioned it, then found yourself hoping there was nothing to worry about.

Saying it out loud can feel like making it real. And your thoughts may go straight from "something has changed" to "what am I going to have to do?" The appointment can start to feel like the beginning of everything you're afraid of.

You do not have to feel ready for every possible answer before you ask for help understanding what you've noticed.

For now, these words are enough: "I've noticed a change, and I don't know what it means."

Start with what you've noticed

Think of one thing you have seen or heard yourself, and roughly when. If it helps, put it in the notes on your phone. You do not need a perfect record. You are describing a concern. You are not naming a condition.

If the fear makes it hard to begin

That's allowed. You can know exactly what worries you about bringing it up and still turn the page. You do not have to resolve the fear first. You can start with one true sentence to one person.

Put the concern into words

You can be honest about what you've noticed and about what you don't know. The sentence is the same whoever you say it to:

"I've noticed [the thing you thought of]. I don't know what it means. I'd like help understanding it."

Next page. *The words for your parent, and for their doctor's office.*

When you speak with your parent

Start with the one thing you noticed. Here are two ways to begin. Use words that sound like you.

SAY THIS

“Mom/Dad, I noticed [what happened]. I'm worried because it's different for you. I don't know what it means. Would you be willing to make an appointment so we can ask your doctor about it?”

OR THIS

“I'm not saying something's wrong. I'm saying I'm worried, and I'd sleep better if we heard it from your doctor together.”

The second one asks them to help you. If asking them to go for their own sake gets nowhere, it gives you another way to ask. You do not have to convince them of an explanation before asking to have a concern checked.

When you contact their doctor's office

SAY THIS TO THE OFFICE

“I'm their daughter. I've noticed some changes and would like to share my observations with their doctor. What is the best way to do that?”

The office can take what you've noticed and put it in their file even when it cannot tell you anything back. Be ready for that. You may not receive a reply. The aim is to get your observations to their doctor before the appointment. Ask which method the office uses before sending personal details, then send your dated notes in writing. You are sharing what you've seen, not making decisions for them.

Privacy rules limit what a doctor can share with you. They do not stop you from telling the doctor what you have seen.

One more page. *If they say no, and when it cannot wait.*

Their no is a place to begin.

ASK THEM

“Can you tell me what bothers you about going?”

Their answer can tell you where to begin. It may be what they might find, the car, the house, the right to decide, or "no" being one of the few things that still feels like theirs. Sometimes the no is about who is asking. Some parents will take it from their own doctor's office and not from their children.

A no tonight is not a no forever. It is their decision, and they are allowed to make it. Raise one thing at a time, not everything at once, and try again on a different day. You can still send what you've noticed to their doctor's office. That is not going around them. It is making sure the person they trust with their health has the full picture when they do go.

When it cannot wait

Some changes are not a conversation for later. Call 911 or go to the emergency room now if:

- they are suddenly confused, over hours or days
- they have fallen and are hurt, or cannot get up
- they have trouble speaking, or weakness on one side
- you cannot wake them

Getting your parent emergency help is not taking their decisions away from them. It is making sure they are safe enough to keep making them. Everything that comes after, including what care they want, is still their decision to make, with you beside them.

Your next step

Choose where you will say the sentence first: to your parent, or to their doctor's office. You can ask for help while you are still afraid. You can begin with what you know and say plainly what you don't.



If the appointment happens and it leads to a diagnosis, the next guide is ready.

My free guide **The First Call** has the eight questions to ask at that appointment. It is at beyondcareco.com/first-call. Until then, I work through the decisions out loud every day at [@beyondcarewithkylie](https://twitter.com/beyondcarewithkylie).

Educational support, not medical or legal advice. This guide does not diagnose or treat any condition, and it does not assess how urgently someone needs care. Bring health concerns to a qualified healthcare professional.