MEZZO

SIBLING CONVERSATION SCRIPTS

What to Say When You Need to Talk About Sharing Caregiving

These conversations are hard. Having the right words ready makes them a little easier. Print this, practice if you need to, and remember: the goal isn't to win an argument — it's to get support and preserve the relationship.

Before You Start

- ✓ **Choose a calm moment** — not during a crisis or right after a frustrating visit
- ✓ **Do the Assumption Audit first** — what do they actually know about the situation?
- ✓ **Have specific asks ready** — vague complaints get vague responses
- ✓ **Lead with information, not frustration** — they can't help with what they don't understand

Script 1: Opening the Door

Use when: You need to initiate the conversation for the first time

> *"I'd like to find a time for us to talk about how we're handling things with Mom/Dad. Not because anything's wrong — I just want to make sure we're all on the same page and I can share what's been happening."*

Why it works: Non-threatening, frames it as informational rather than accusatory, asks for a scheduled conversation rather than ambushing them.

Script 2: Sharing the Reality

Use when: They don't seem to understand how much is involved

> *"I want to give you a clearer picture of what a typical week looks like right now. I don't think I've done a good job explaining it, and I realize you can't help with what you don't know about."*

Why it works: Takes ownership of the communication gap, invites them in rather than blaming them for being out.

Script 3: Making Specific Asks

Use when: You need concrete help, not just sympathy

> *"What would really help is if someone could handle [specific task: Sunday visits, managing prescriptions, coordinating with the doctor's office, researching home care options]. Would you be able to take that on? Or is there something else that works better for your situation?"*

Why it works: Specific asks are easier to say yes to than vague requests for "help." Offering alternatives acknowledges their constraints.

Script 4: Bridging the Distance Gap

Use when: A sibling lives far away and can't provide hands-on help

> *"I know you can't be here as often because of distance. Would contributing toward [specific expense: a home health aide twice a week, meal delivery service, medical equipment, respite care so I can take a break] feel like a way you could help?"*

Why it works: Acknowledges their limitation without resentment, offers a concrete way to contribute that matches their capacity.

Script 5: When They Get Defensive

Use when: The conversation starts going sideways

> *"I'm not saying you're not doing enough. I'm saying I need more support, and I'm trying to figure out what that could look like. Can we focus on solutions instead of who's doing what wrong?"*

Why it works: Redirects from blame to problem-solving, validates their feelings while refocusing on what you actually need.

Script 6: When They Minimize the Situation

Use when: They say things like "Mom seems fine to me" or "You're overreacting"

> *"I hear that she seems okay during your visits. What I'm seeing day-to-day is different. I'd love for you to spend a full day with her — not a dinner visit, but a whole day — and then let's talk again. I think you'd see what I'm seeing."*

Why it works: Doesn't argue about perception — invites them to experience it themselves. Parents often "perform" better during short visits.

Script 7: Setting a Boundary

Use when: You've asked, they haven't stepped up, and you need to protect yourself

> *"I can't keep doing this at the current level without more support. Starting [date], I'm going to [specific change: cut back to visiting twice a week instead of daily, hire help and split the cost, take every other weekend off]. I wanted to let you know so you can plan accordingly."*

Why it works: States your limit clearly, gives advance notice, lets them decide how to respond. You can't control their choices, only yours.

Remember

You might not get everything you need.

But closed mouths don’t get fed (you won't get anything if you don't ask).

Asking clearly, specifically, and without apology is the first step.