



**HOUGUM  
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July 2018 Newsletter



## How to Establish Good Communication with Aging Parents When You Live Far Away

Long distance relationships can be difficult. This can be especially true when caring for an aging parent.

Beyond missing your parents, a few practical difficulties might arise as they age. This can include helping them manage their finances, choose decision makers, and complete their estate planning. Based on their long-term care needs you may also need to help coordinate caregiving, in-home or otherwise, and assist them with more complicated tasks such as insurance, a health diagnosis, and any number of day-to-day tasks.

In each of these situations, communication is key. As a loving family member or friend, how can you help if you don't know what's going on? Consistent communication is not only critical to provide much needed support, it also shows how much you care.

Thankfully, modern technology has made it easier than ever to stay in touch. Smart phones, text messages and email make for instantaneous connections (Continued on Page 2)

(Contd. from Page 1) across any geographical distance. If your elderly parent needs a smartphone remember that he or she may also need instructions to be able to effectively use it. As you help your parent, proceed with plenty of patience and focus on building one new lesson at a time. There's also an array of functional phone choices with moderate pricing plans. Enlarged text and simplified home screen configurations can go a long way toward alleviating initial confusion.

Video chat applications like Skype and Facetime (for iPhone users) also make for simple and rewarding conversational experiences. They're easy to negotiate and really do offer a greater sense of closeness than a regular phone call. Video can also help you have a better understanding of what your parent needs but is unable to express to you through words.

Through technology you can also access shared scheduling and contact apps. These can be helpful, especially when you loop in local resources in your elder parent's community. These resources can include doctors' offices, churches, pharmacies, neighbors, and senior support groups.

Help your parent use these tools to keep a shared calendar with you of local social events in their community. You can check-in shortly after an elder parent attends one. Talking about new friends and events can be a light way of touching base but maintain steady communication.

Although technology can make it easier to stay connected with your loved ones, be sure to visit as much as reasonably possible. While circumstances may dictate the need to have a long distance relationship with your parents and frequent communication can make it easier, an in-person hug is irreplaceable. Do you need help with this or any challenges your parent is facing? Do not wait to contact our law firm and schedule a meeting.

## **Can Estate Planning Help You with Your Medical Decisions?**

If you are in an accident and are placed on life support, would you prefer doctors to undertake every measure possible to keep you alive or take you off life support when nothing more can be done? How would you like any pain to be managed? How long would you prefer to receive treatment at the end of your life? In the event you cannot make medical decisions for yourself, who would you like to make them for you?

While these questions may not be at the forefront of your mind, they are important to consider no matter what stage in life you are currently at. Creating a living will is one way to organize these thoughts into detailed instructions, so you can rest assured you will be cared for according to your wishes. (Continued on Page 3)



(Contd. from Page 2) A living will is part of your estate plan that can serve as a guide for you and your loved ones during a time of crisis.

Let us share with you some common questions many of our clients ask us about living wills so you can consider whether it is a good fit for your estate planning needs.

What is a living will?

A living will is the most-commonly used name for the legal document that sets forth your wishes for your end-of-life care. The living will does not take effect until you are determined to be unable to make medical decisions for yourself and facing a condition such as a terminal illness or persistent vegetative state.

Can I change or update the provisions of a living will?

One of the primary benefits of creating a living will or any of your estate planning is flexibility. Although there are estate planning tools that are irrevocable, the living will is not one of these documents. At any point as long as you have capacity, you can update or change the instructions provided in the living will with your estate planning attorney.

When should I create a living will?

It is never too early to start planning. Unfortunately, accidents and illnesses can occur at any time. Whether you are 18 or 80, establishing a solid estate plan that you are comfortable with is imperative. Not only will you feel more comfortable knowing who will carry out your wishes, but your loved ones will not be subjected to the stress of making difficult decisions for you without knowing your wishes.

There are many questions to be asked and factors to be considered when creating your estate plan. As always, we are here to be a resource for you. If this article left you with more questions than answers, do not hesitate to contact our law firm and schedule a meeting with Attorney Alan Hougum to discuss your estate planning questions.





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Attorney Alan Hougum and his compassionate team will help you protect yourself and the people you love with strategic planning strategies, such as wills, asset protection and trusts, powers of attorney, estate trusts, elder law planning, Medicaid crisis planning, Medicaid eligibility and application, probate and estate administration, avoiding probate, charitable planning and giving, special needs, and estate tax planning. Hougum Law Firm, LLC, serves the entire Wausau, Wisconsin area.

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305 S. 18th Avenue, Suite 200, Wausau, Wisconsin 54401. Do you have questions you need answered before or after your appointment? Just let us know! Contact us by email at [info@hougumlaw.com](mailto:info@hougumlaw.com) or call us at 715-843-5001.