

MORO

YOUR RESULT: THE HOLDING PATTERN

Help Your Parent Find a Place to Land

A resource guide for adult children whose
parent has slowed down since leaving work.

What you're seeing

Your parent hasn't crashed. They've slowed way down. Fewer plans, fewer people, days that run together. Ask what they've been up to and the answer is short. From the outside, it can look like they're doing nothing at all.

That's the Holding Pattern. Work used to decide where your parent went, who they saw, and what came next. When it ended, nothing replaced that pull, so they're circling. That isn't laziness. Most people spend decades preparing financially for retirement, with far less chance to plan the life that comes after work. A holding pattern is meant to be temporary. Your parent needs a place to land, and it has to be one they choose.

How to tell what you're looking at

Start by looking out for three things.

1. Is anything on their calendar with a date attached, like a lunch, a class, a trip, or a visit?
2. Do they see anyone outside the family in a typical week?
3. When you ask about their days, do they sound at ease, or flat?

Signs your parent is in a holding pattern

One or two is normal. Most of them, for months, is worth a conversation.

- Plans are rare, and the ones that exist usually started as someone else's idea.
- The days run together, and it's hard for them to say what they did yesterday.
- They've stopped mentioning friends, hobbies, or places they used to go.
- When you ask what's new, they say "nothing much," and they seem to mean it.

What the research says. In a U.S. study that followed older adults over time, retired people showed steeper declines in their sense of purpose, and those who stayed more active in leisure showed smaller declines ([Lewis & Hill, 2020](#)). This is an association, not proof that staying active prevents the decline.

How to start the conversation

“You should try...” lands as a verdict on how your parent lives. Ask a question about the person they were before work took over, and let them do the steering.

Instead of this	Try this
“You should try...”	“What did you love doing before work took over?”
“You never do anything anymore.”	“What’s been the best part of your week?”
“Why don’t you get out more?”	“Is there anywhere you’ve missed going?”
“Are you lonely?”	“Who have you enjoyed seeing lately?”
“We should get together sometime.”	“Lunch Thursday? I’ll pick you up.”

A simple three-step flow

1. Pick a low-pressure moment, like a walk, a meal, or a drive. Don't squeeze it into the end of a busy call.
2. Ask what they loved before work took over, then let the story run. Years of work may have crowded out things they used to enjoy.
3. Ask for one small thing with a date on it: a lunch, a walk, or help with a project. A date works better than “sometime.”

Content or flat?

Content looks like ease. They're relaxed, they talk about small things with some pleasure, and they'd tell you if they wanted something different. Leave the pace alone and keep asking now and then. Flat looks like low energy: short answers, no interest in things they used to enjoy, nothing they look forward to. With flat, skip the bigger schedule. Start with one small thing and stay close.

If they say “I’m fine”

“I believe you. I’m not asking because something’s wrong. I’m curious what a good week would look like for you.”

Then let it go. If the question stays with them, they'll bring it back. That's the conversation working.

Where your role ends

You can start the conversation, and you can ask for a date on the calendar. You can't be the landing place. If you become the main reason your parent leaves the house, the holding pattern has just moved onto your schedule. The place they land has to be one they choose.

Your part is to notice, ask, and offer. Their part is to decide. Offer instead of assigning: "I'd be glad to go with you the first time" lands better than "I signed you up." Go one small step at a time. A parent who has slowed down for months won't speed up all at once, and a walk this week counts.

If you see lasting low mood, pulling away from people, or a loss of interest in things they used to enjoy, encourage them to talk with their doctor. Coaching supports a good life after work. It doesn't replace medical or mental health care.

If you live far away

Distance makes a slow stretch hard to see. You get a phone call and a parent who says "fine." Three adjustments help.

- Ask for something small with a date on it. "Can we video call Thursday? I'd love to see what you're working on." A date gives them something to look forward to.
- Ask what's on their calendar this week, and listen for "nothing." An empty week tells you something.
- Plan a visit around one thing they used to love, and ask what they'd want to do while you're there.

Want a thinking partner for this conversation? Moro offers virtual coaching, so your parent can work with a coach wherever either of you lives. [**Book a discovery call**](#)

Finding a place to land

For your parent to fill in, or for the two of you to talk through. There are no right answers.

Part of life	What I used to love	A small step to try
People I'd like to see		
Places I miss going		
Things I used to do		
Something to look forward to		

One small thing, with a date on it:

Keep it moving

One conversation is a start. Some parents take it from there. Others want a thinking partner who isn't their kid. Moro works with retirees on purpose, identity, relationships, and how they spend their time: the human side of retirement, separate from the money side. Your parent can [book a discovery call](#) directly, or you can reach out first at hello@trymoro.com.

Book a discovery call

Not sure this fits your parent, or want a sibling to take it too? [Take the quiz](#)

Source

Lewis NA, Hill PL. Does being active mean being purposeful in older adulthood? Examining the moderating role of retirement. *Psychology and Aging*, 2020;35(7):1050–1057. Data: Health and Retirement Study, 2008–2016. pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32790458

Moro provides retirement lifestyle coaching. It is not financial, legal, medical, or mental health advice.