



## **Essential Conversations Project™: Innovations in Family Dialogue for Intergenerational Harmony**

### **Presenters:**

Resa S. Eisen, MSW, RSW, Co-Founder Essential Conversations Project™ Inc.

Amy S. D'Aprix, MSW, PhD, Co-Founder, Essential Conversations Project™ Inc.

**Objective/Theory:** The impact of critical transitions in mid-life and beyond have become well known in the fields of health and social sciences. There is a growing appreciation for the increased vulnerability of the older person and the need for creative and innovative ways to provide support and care. However, lagging behind, is the understanding of the impact on family members and family relationships. The Essential Conversations Project™ recognizes the need for new conversations between the generations that will allow for planning and decision making while acknowledging the emotional and relational issues that frequently interfere with either the decision-making process or decision implementation. These Essential Conversations are a facilitated process through which families plan for the life transition issues facing older adults and their families.

**Interactive Discussion/Activities:** Through Interactive discussions and activities participants will experience the Essential Conversations Process. They will leave the workshop with an understanding of the stages of facilitating an Essential Conversation, specific methods and tools for implementing an Essential Conversation, and an ability to translate those skills into their practice with older adults and their families. Current research findings about the impact of family conversation in times of transition will be included in the presentation.

**Clinical Implications:** Not having conversations about these life transition issues often results in family conflict and even disintegration. The reactive conversation at times of crisis often increases the vulnerability of the older person, and in fact, of the family unit. The Essential Conversation that occurs early and in a planful manner is most effective in creating intergenerational solidarity and positive outcomes for all. Some recent studies in the palliative care setting have found distinct benefits for family members and elders as they discuss end of life care. The presenters foundational belief is that better outcomes for older adults and their families has transformational implications for societal cohesion, because the family unit is the dynamic building block within all cultures.