

# The 3 Digital Locks Every Aging Parent Needs

## Simple Steps to Protect Their Identity, Accounts, and Life Savings

As our parents age, they become prime targets for scams, identity theft, and cyber fraud. Criminals know that older adults often have savings, strong credit, and a trusting nature.

The good news? There are three powerful “locks” you can put in place today to dramatically reduce risk.

### **Lock #1: Turn On Two-Step Verification (2FA) Everywhere**

If your parent only uses a password to log into accounts, that is no longer enough.

Two-Step Verification (also called Multi-Factor Authentication) adds an extra layer of protection. Even if someone steals their password, they still cannot access the account without a second code sent to their phone, email, or authentication app.

#### **Turn this on for:**

- Bank accounts
- Credit card accounts
- Email accounts (especially!)
- Medicare or health portals
- Social media
- Investment accounts
- Amazon or online shopping accounts
- Apple ID or Google accounts

 Why email matters most:

If a scammer gets into their email, they can reset passwords to almost everything else.

#### **Action Step:**

Sit down with your parent and enable two-step verification on every primary account. Write down backup recovery information and store it safely.

### **Lock #2: Freeze Their Credit & Identity**

One of the strongest protections available is a credit freeze.

A credit freeze prevents anyone from opening new credit cards, loans, or accounts in your parent’s name — even if a scammer has their Social Security number.

And the best part? It’s free.

You can freeze credit with the three major bureaus:

- Equifax
- Experian
- TransUnion

Once frozen:

- No new credit accounts can be opened
- Identity thieves are blocked
- Your parent’s existing accounts continue to work normally

If they ever need to apply for credit, you can temporarily “unfreeze” it.

 This is especially important if your parent:

- Has had a data breach
- Shares personal information easily
- Has mild cognitive decline
- Rarely applies for new credit anyway

## **Lock #3: The Call-Back Rule (Stop Panic Scams)**

Scammers create urgency and fear.

They pretend to be:

- A bank representative
- Medicare
- Social Security
- A grandchild in trouble
- Law enforcement
- A utility company threatening shutoff

They rely on panic.

The rule is simple:

👉 If someone calls demanding money or urgent action, hang up.

👉 Call back using a secure number you already have saved.

Never call back using a number the caller gives you.

For “grandparent scams,” teach your parent:

- No real emergency requires secrecy.
- No legitimate agency demands gift cards, wire transfers, or cryptocurrency.
- It is always okay to pause and call you first.

Create a family code word for emergencies so they can verify real calls from loved ones.

## **Additional Protection Strategies**

### **Secure Their Devices**

- Keep phones, tablets, and computers updated.
- Install reputable antivirus software.
- Remove unused apps.
- Use strong, unique passwords (consider a password manager).

### **Reduce Robocalls**

- Register their number on the National Do Not Call Registry.
- Use call-blocking apps.
- Silence unknown callers if possible.

### **Monitor Accounts Regularly**

- Set up transaction alerts for:
  - Large withdrawals
  - Wire transfers
  - New payees
- Review bank and credit statements monthly together.

### **Watch for Behavioral Red Flags**

- Secretiveness about finances
- Sudden new “friends” online
- Large unexplained withdrawals
- Fearful behavior after phone calls

Scammers often manipulate victims into silence.

# Have the Conversation Early

The goal is not to scare your parent.  
The goal is protection and partnership.

You might say:

“I want to make sure no one ever takes advantage of you. Let’s put some protections in place now so we don’t have to worry later.”

Approach it as empowerment — not control.

## Final Thoughts

Cybercrime against older adults is rising every year. One scam can wipe out decades of savings in hours.

But three simple locks —

- ✓ Two-Step Verification
- ✓ Credit Freeze
- ✓ The Call-Back Rule

— can dramatically reduce risk.

Protecting our parents financially is one of the greatest gifts we can give them.

## A Gentle Disclaimer

This guide is meant to provide general information and practical steps you can consider when protecting yourself and your aging loved ones. I am not a financial advisor, attorney, cybersecurity specialist, or licensed professional. I’m simply sharing research, best practices, and insights to help families feel more informed and empowered.

Every family’s situation is different, and laws and security recommendations can change. Please consult qualified financial, legal, or cybersecurity professionals for advice tailored to your specific circumstances.

Parent Care Workshop is not liable for decisions made based on this information. My hope is simply to help you feel more confident and prepared as you navigate this season of life.