

# Advice to Adult Children



*Home is always best,  
but there may come a time  
when it is no longer practical.*



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## ADVICE TO ADULT CHILDREN

The decision to move a parent or loved one into a supportive living environment should be approached positively. There are many benefits to making this transition. The comfort of your parent's new home will ease anxieties. Your loved one will be eating properly, better able to care for his or her own needs, and in daily contact with peers. Making the decision and actually moving are the hardest parts for everyone concerned. But, once the transition is made, positive results will appear almost immediately.

This guide is designed to help you once you have decided that while home may be better, it is just no longer practical. For every individual and family, the "right time" is different.

## UNDERSTANDING THE BENEFITS

The benefits of moving to a supportive living environment are extensive. We constantly hear "we wish we had made this decision sooner!" Many residents find that they enjoy life again, and at a level they did not believe would ever again be possible.

### *The Benefits*

- Regularly scheduled meals meet both nutritional and hydration needs.
- A social environment allays many fears experienced when people live alone.
- Social opportunities will help relieve the loneliness and depression associated with living alone.
- Help with housekeeping not only promotes good hygiene, but also eases the frustration of simply being unable to perform certain tasks.
- Medication assistance will provide consistent health benefits and a greater peace of mind for the family.
- Help with Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) will allow your loved one to once again experience the successes of day-to-day life.
- Caring staff offers empathy, love, understanding, and emotional support.

## THE "SOONER RATHER THAN LATER" APPROACH

The "Sooner Rather Than Later" Approach is always best when talking about options. Understanding what options are available and how family members feel about the decisions that need to be made to help a loved one should be discussed long before a decision is necessary.

"Sooner Rather Than Later" is also the better approach when making the move to a supportive environment. If you wait for the advanced disabilities of aging to occur before making the move, deeper levels of institutionalization may be required, and the number of options available to your family may be limited. To avoid these problems, don't wait for a crisis.

### DEVELOPING AN APPROACH

Your parent may not be a part of the initial conversation regarding his or her well being and your concerns. As the family who must approach a parent, you should:

#### *Decide who needs to be involved.*

Recruit your parent's support network. When there are more people discussing their concerns about a parent's living situation, the case is strengthened and the issues are more clear. It will also ensure that everyone is "on board" when it comes time to make the decision.

*The following people may need or want to be involved:*

Siblings	Children	Spouse
Physicians	Friends	Clergy
Social workers	Extended family	

#### *Agree on a strategy.*

Everyone who is participating should agree on a strategy to approach your loved one. Support the messenger. The last thing he or she needs is to lose the support of the participants when things get tough.

#### *Identify emotions.*

Identify the emotions of all family members involved in the decision process (Parent, siblings, spouses, yourself, children).

These might include:

#### FOR YOU AND YOUR FAMILY

- Guilt
- Anger
- Resentment
- Sadness
- Depression
- Family Stress

#### FOR YOUR LOVED ONE

- Loss of purpose
- Issues with mortality
- Finality of decisions
- Changing family roles
- Fear

#### *Understand and deal with your emotions.*

Resolve old family issues - new issues cannot be dealt with until old ones are settled. Seek professional help, if necessary.

### WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE?

When multiple loved ones are involved in the decision making process and extended support network, it may be helpful to divide responsibilities based on skills, available time, and personality.

#### *Responsibilities may include:*

Direction of and decision making regarding healthcare (including deciding on a supportive environment). This person will be your loved one's healthcare advocate, accompanying a parent to doctor's visits, keeping track of medications, treatments, and surgeries, and helping make general healthcare decisions.

Managing financial matters.

Ensuring social well-being, which includes visiting an aging parent and making sure he or she is comfortable at the new community.

Remember that all of these responsibilities are equally important. Be sure to always respect each other's decisions and actions.

## DISCUSS YOUR CONCERNS WITH YOUR PARENT

- Arrange a specific time and place to meet with your loved one.
- Discuss your concerns in an honest and straightforward manner.
- Avoid misunderstandings by being clear.
- Respect your parent's intelligence, independence, and dignity with your actions as well as your words.
- Involve your parent in discussing his or her needs and involve him or her in the decision making as much as possible.
- Allow time for the idea to sink in.

## EVALUATE AVAILABLE OPTIONS

Carefully consider moving your loved one from his or her familiar community. Listen to his or her needs. A parent may be more open to the move if he can maintain relationships with lifelong friends; he will resist the move if he doesn't have any friends and is worried that he'll be too far from family for them to visit.

Read "How to Choose a Retirement Community" available from AARP, or similar publication. The internet is a wonderful source of information, as well.

Determine what you are looking for in a community.

Research all the options. The Yellow Pages, Chamber of Commerce, Area Agency on Aging, discharge planners at the hospital, and physicians call all provide you with names of facilities. Document this information, including how well each community meets your loved one's needs.

Make a checklist of what you are looking for and complete one for each community you visit.

Verbally go over the options with your parent, narrowing the choices.

Remember that too many choices can be confusing for all concerned. It can also be exhausting for your parent.

Visit one or two communities with your parents. The tour should include a long question and answer period with a representative of the community. This will allow you all to really understand the lifestyle the facility offers.

Read contracts carefully. Each community will offer you a traditional lease and a service agreement. The lease will focus on matters of real estate and is similar to most rental agreements. The service agreement should be evaluated more carefully. This contract outlines the personal care aspects of the services to be provided and what fees will be charged. Levels of Service are based on a Resident Assessment. Make sure that the assessment is objective. To fully understand the long-term cost of your parent's care you should understand how a community's Level of Service and related fees are both determined. Remember that as your loved one ages, the costs associated with caring for him or her will increase.

## MAKING THE DECISION

Use your checklist to help you make this decision.

Lend extra weight to the community that "feels right." It probably is.

Make the decision.

Set the move-in date.

## UNDERSTANDING THE TRANSITION

This move can create a huge sense of loss: the loss of home, of independence, and of friends. Be sensitive to your parent's emotional needs. Help him or her embrace this new adventure.

*"Life is a daring adventure or nothing."*

*- Helen Keller*



## WARNING SIGNS CHECKLIST

The following checklist can help you determine whether or not a person should really be home alone. These warning signs should alert you that an individual may not be capable of meeting all of his or her needs. Check each area that applies to your patient or loved one. Even one checked area is a warning sign that should not be ignored.

- EATING  
Individual is not eating, or not eating right
- BATHING/HYGIENE  
Individual is not bathing and is uninterested in personal hygiene
- DRESSING/GROOMING  
Individual has lost interest in appearance or does not dress all day
- MEDICATIONS  
Individual takes medicine at the wrong time or takes the wrong dosage
- HOUSEKEEPING  
Individual is not able to keep or clean house as before
- MOBILITY  
Individual cannot ambulate without some assistance, or has frequent falls
- SECURITY/SAFETY  
Individual is alone, vulnerable, and may require daily visits
- INDEPENDENCE  
Individual is increasingly dependent on others for assistance with transportation, shopping, financial affairs, laundry, etc.
- SOCIALIZATION  
Individual is not in contact with others, or lacks group interaction

*We realize that there are many housing options for the elderly. All of the above needs should be considered for an individual's success in any environment. We focus on the overall well-being of each of our residents. We encourage you to take an objective look at the needs of your patient or loved one.*



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