

ORCHARD VIEWS

ALL ABOUT SENIOR LIVING

Talking about changes to come

We all have the right to make our own decisions, but sometimes we lose awareness of the safety of our situation and how our surroundings are contributing to our demise. Moving the person to a safer place can minimize their risk of hurting themselves further, whether this is physical, emotional or physiologically.

I always encourage the person that is needing to make the change to be a part of the solution. Coming for a tour to a retirement home and at least seeing what all the hub bub is about helps to rest their minds that their family aren't trying to just drop them off. Seeing the potential and addressing their fears is the best way to manage the situation. There is also something to be said about others interacting with the family member and getting them to share their likes, dislikes, fears and excitement about life. After all it's all about them and enjoying life to its fullest. Although families want that for the person, sometimes having others involved and supporting the journey is the way it transpires more smoothly. We often feel as though family are meddling when they encourage us to do something. "They must want something else from me!"

As a family member of someone that needs to make a change, you must start with identifying if they are a "people pleaser" or self-centered. This will establish how you position the story to them.



Margaret Duncan & Thora Pugh, old friends reunite

What do I mean by a people pleaser? A people pleaser is someone that will do whatever makes others happy.

This person will do it for others. So, you focus on the reason why it's important to you or the person that is the caregiver.

"Mom I'm so worried about your health these days. You have had 3 falls in the last 6 months that have changed what you can do. I can't sleep at night thinking of you lying on the floor for hours, hurt and alone. It would give me such peace of mind to know that in a retirement home, there would always be someone around to help you. And if you needed other support they are there! Plus being able to talk to other like-minded people would give you the quality of life I think you deserve."

The self-centered is one that focuses on themselves. So use their words.

What they have said to you in the past that is important to them. For example,

I can't believe Frank would live in his house alone or when getting up & down the stairs takes him 10 min. "I hate cooking for one." "It took me an hour to get up and dressed this morning. I'm exhausted before I even start the day."

"Mom, I've been listening to you over the last few months and I'm hearing some concerns about living here. It sounds like you are wanting something easier and have others around. There are a few great homes in the area that you might want to consider. I certainly don't want to make the decision for you as to where you live. I don't pick out your clothes or cars, I don't want to start with a new home when it's time. It's up to you to pick your top two. The family will support you and make a transition easy."

Sometimes you need to use others as the excuse. Like the Doctor. For the most part they don't mind being the bad guy. "The Doctor has concerns that you are not thriving at home. (you are in danger, you are not taking your medication, etc)".

With some people, you need to add an extension of the story to help make sense to the person and help provide them with a short-term acceptance of a move. This is often for someone with cognitive impairments or a fear of commitments.

Giving someone a timeframe can sometimes allow them to let their guard down long enough that they actually fall in love with their new lifestyle. And that's what you want.

"We need to do some renovations to make the house safer for you, but it will take several months to get it done. We don't want to inconvenience you and we want you to have something to look forward to each day with the activities and other people that you will see each day."

"We don't want you to be so isolated during the winter months. We can't be there as often and the chances of you falling on the ice when you go to get the mail is higher and higher each year. We would like to set you up for a winter stay."

Once you start the conversation, there will be fears and reservations to a move. You need to identify what they are, as well as what they see as being most enjoyable about living in a communal living. The best idea is to have a conversation with one of the homes that you believe Mom or Dad will like. Their representative can help with answering some of those fears and provide you with the answers ahead of time.

These conversations need to happen when the person is peaceful and ready to listen. For some that's more difficult than others. Just remember that it is emotional for everyone involved and you are not doing it to "put them away", but to give them the best they deserve.



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