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Deciding to move.

Should I stay or should I go?

Downsizing and moving to a senior living community is a highly personal decision. Some of the common threads that often drive this decision are: loneliness, too much house upkeep, changing neighborhood, declining health, not eating right or getting out very much. It can be one or all of these factors that compel a major lifestyle change. Some seniors see the need for change themselves while others benefit from family or a friend's advice.

Many times, it's the adult children who see the need for change before their parents do. Unfortunately, research shows that all too often, adult children avoid talking with their parents about the future and are hesitant to discuss health, finances and personal goals. Some children wait until their parent's health declines and then are forced to make a decision on their own. Experts say that these life-changing conversations should always be held sooner, rather than later, while the senior can still be part of the decision making process.

Case in point is Lisa, whose 80-year-old mother lived out east in the family's eight-room house for 47 years—22 of those years alone. She didn't want to leave the home. "Why pay rent when I don't have a mortgage!" was her battle cry.

But Lisa and her brothers saw depression setting in as their mother's friends got fewer and farther away. Eventually, there were constant calls to her children as she got out less and less and ate alone and

shopped alone. "She was lonely and didn't even know it," said Lisa, who finally convinced her to "just take a look" at a nearby Brookdale senior living community.

The community was a hit with mom, but she wasn't ready to make the big move. She felt an obligation to stay in the home where she and her husband raised their family. It seemed to her almost frivolous to move from a house that was paid for and full of memories.

But mom's memories were weighing her down and the family wanted her to get on with her life. So Lisa got creative. "I knew she would thrive there," she said, and suggested that her mother keep the family home, and try moving into the community for just one year. Her mom liked the idea. And Lisa promised she could move back home if it didn't work out.

Within a couple of months, Lisa's mother was settled in, happy and ready to sell the family home. The daughter reports that hardly a day goes by when her mother doesn't tell her how happy she is and "why didn't I do this sooner!?"

Lisa says the relief on her part is enormous and the huge burden of fear and responsibility was lifted the moment her mom moved into a senior living community.

This response is common for children whose parents live in a community where there is someone always on duty to help them 24 hours a day, seven days a

week. Healthy or not, seniors are often comforted by the thought that people are watching over them and readily available. Children also find comfort with the situation. And in the long run, there is peace of mind knowing their parents can have more help down the line as they grow older or their needs change.

Seniors often make the decision to move on their own when certain changes in their life occur. Ceasing to drive is a good example. Suddenly trapped at home, seniors must rely on friends, family members or taxis to get around. All too often, they just stop going out and become isolated and lonely. The transportation services available day and night at senior communities are often a key point in the decision making process. It allows them the ability to stay active and not worry about the "how or when" factors

of going shopping, getting to a doctor appointment or going to the theater.

Most senior living communities help promote overall healthier and happier lifestyles. Aging studies have shown that the key to aging well is being both contented and stimulated.



Dr. George Vaillant, director of the Harvard Study of Adult Development and author of *Aging Well*, spells out four basic ongoing activities necessary for successful aging:

- Play
- Creativity
- Continued learning
- Making new friends

Vaillant's study shows that seniors who engage in these pursuits express the greatest sense of fulfillment. He notes that the most important activity of the four is the ability of seniors to make new friends, as they replace the inevitable losses from family and friends who move away or pass on. He adds that seniors, especially women can languish behind—alone in the family home—and be afraid to move on.

Senior living communities often excel in promoting the four factors that Vaillant extols for aging well. A monthly calendar of activities that promote play, creativity and on going education encourages seniors to participate at any level of engagement they desire. From swimming pools to shooting pool, from computer classes to cooking classes, there's usually something for every taste.

As for creating new friendships, it's a built-in factor to community living. Many seniors expand their circle of friends by dining at the in-house restaurant and sitting at different tables with new people on a regular basis. Other activities such as cocktail hours, live entertainment and special events, keep residents mingling and having fun.

For most people, the antiquated notion of an "old folks home" is almost all but gone as they see friends and family moving into stimulating new environments. Research shows that the key to being happy in later life is simply making lifestyle choices that will keep you moving forward and not hold you down or back. And today, for many older Americans, moving forward means getting a new lease on life and moving into a senior living community.

For more information on retirement communities, or to receive a complimentary copy of a resource video on *Moving, Changing and Transitions to Successful Aging*, call toll free 1-877-977-3800.

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