



WHEN TO KNOW IT'S TIME TO MOVE TO ASSISTED LIVING

By Janice Martin, Senior Advisor / Family Liaison

If you have been concerned that you are no longer able to care for your spouse or a parent who is living alone, it may be time to consider a move to an assisted living community. But how do you know when it's time?

We all have a circumstance that we know will be the final straw. For some, it's when their loved one becomes incontinent of their bowels; or when they no longer recognize you; or they wander; or they become aggressive. What I suggest is that you tell someone – your children, a trusted friend, your pastor – what that event will be. And when that event happens, it is their job to remind you that this is when you had decided things had moved beyond your abilities. Our natural inclination is to justify that it was “just this one time” and that you'll wait for it to happen again. Allow them to help you through to the next step.

I have advised families not to wait for a crisis. Often, families wait for one more fall. Or the next one. That next one may result in a head injury, a broken hip, or worse. Sometimes waiting can mean the difference between being eligible for assisted living or having to go to a long-term skilled community.

Some thoughts to consider include:

- Are you finding that they have become isolated and sit alone day after day?
- Do they no longer sleep in their bed, but rather the recliner where they also spend most of the day? And do they sleep most of the time?
- How long has it been since they bathed, washed their hair, changed their clothes, shaved, or brushed their teeth?
- Are there piles of dirty clothes or old newspapers lying around the house?
- Are they eating nutritious food or are they eating take out or delivery?
- Are there dirty dishes or empty food containers piling up?
- Have they left a pot on the stove or put a pot in the microwave? Be sure to check the microwave when you visit to check for burn marks.
- Have they become incontinent and are their clothes or furniture soiled?
- Are they disposing of incontinence products properly or does the house smell of urine?



One of the most important questions is, can they evacuate the house in case of a fire and are they able to dial 911? How hard is it for them to get up out of a bed or a chair? Can they do it alone? How hard is it to walk? Do they get disoriented using a telephone and confuse it with the remote?

Many people consider doing a trial stay. With few exceptions, it rarely works. It takes time for the individual to get accustomed to the routine. It takes time for the staff to get accustomed to your loved one's routine. It takes time for you to iron out the flaws and come to learn and trust the staff. It takes time for them to begin to feel that this is their new normal. Whether their stay is for a week or long term, they will always want to go home. Always. But that may no longer be realistic.

You may be waiting for your loved one to agree to move to assisted living. I can assure you, in most cases this will never happen. You may be afraid of making your loved one mad at you. Remember that you are now the decision maker acting in their best interest. If living at home is no longer safe, realistic, or beyond your abilities, you must make this decision for them.

I have a saying I have used many times – “The greater the need, the greater the resistance.” The longer you wait, the more resistance you will get as their care

needs increase. It will never be an easy decision and you will always question yourself. Reach out for support and allow others to help you as you move toward this next chapter in your loved one's life.

By working with a local referral company such as Senior Liaison of Central Florida, we will help you during each step of your journey. We will narrow your search to a few qualified communities and will personally accompany you on a tour. We can also connect you with local services to assist in your transition. In most cases, our services are completely free and we're always available! We are **“Your Guide Through the Chaos!”**

Call for a free consultation by contacting Janice Martin at Senior Liaison of Central Florida at **352-477-1866** or email us at

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