



BETTER FIVE YEARS TOO EARLY THAN FIVE MINUTES TOO LATE

By Janice Martin, Owner of Senior Liaison of Central Florida

Someone recently told me that a salesperson at a community once said to her, "Better five years too early than five minutes too late." I had never heard that before, but I couldn't agree more. It validates what I have said for years – that most people wait for a crisis before thinking about senior living or they are forced to make an immediate decision.

It reminded me of a meeting I had with a husband and wife who are thinking about assisted living. They aren't sure when they want to make a move, but at least they're talking about it. The wife has some early memory impairment and they are both in their mid-80's. The husband asked me why I felt they should make a move now rather than later. There was no hesitation with my response.

Imagine two scenarios. In the first, the husband and wife move to assisted living together now. Although neither really need any care, they allow themselves the confidence of taking their time to find the community that fits their lifestyle and budget needs. Their family has time to plan to travel to assist with the move. Because they don't need much care, they don't have to pay any care fees, if at all. They sell their home after they've moved, allowing for a calm and relaxed transition. They meet the other residents, get to know the staff, and enjoy the ability to come and go as they wish.

A few months, or perhaps a year later, the wife's memory impairment has increased. And one day unexpectedly, the husband dies. Although this is devastating to everyone, the wife is now settled in her new home. The staff knows her and steps in immediately to provide the care that her husband may have been doing for her. The residents know her and surround her with love and support. She is allowed the comfort of grieving for the loss of her husband quietly.

Now, imagine the other scenario. The husband and wife decide to stay in the home "until they're ready" (in other words, something happens). The wife's memory impairment has increased, and her husband is providing all her care and she's not safe to be alone. One day, her husband dies unexpectedly. The family panics and has to rush to her after making arrangements for their travel and being away from work for an extended time. They are now faced with finding an assisted living for their



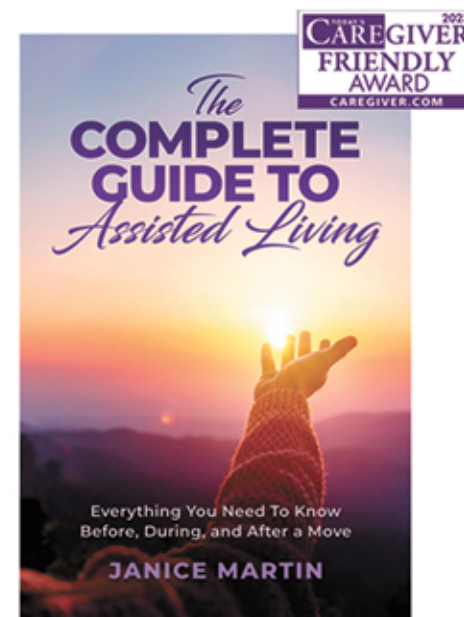
mother without knowing what to look for or one that can meet her needs. They make a hasty decision hoping for the best. They find someone to sell the house, but they are also left to decide what to do with all their things. The wife is now in an unfamiliar environment with people she doesn't know, and she doesn't understand where her husband is. Everything is chaos and the grieving process is now doubled from all the immediate changes.

Perhaps the decision to move doesn't necessarily need to be five years. But the point is that if you are the caregiver for a spouse who may be declining, it is vital that you make decisions now for their safety and well-being. You don't know if you have days, months, or even years for something to happen. You as the primary caregiver may be perfectly healthy, but it may not be health related incident. You could make a quick trip to pick up a prescription and be involved in an accident. None of us has a crystal ball to see when and how it will happen.

Husband and wives move to assisted living together often, even though one of them needs no care at all. This is the truest gesture of love and compassion. Although the caregiver can continue to provide the care in their new place, it may be a good idea to have the staff take over some of the responsibility. Not only will this allow the caregiver time to be "off duty," it also allows the staff to understand how to provide the care and what medications are given. If the spouse always gives the other a shower, this can be very upsetting when they are no longer there to let them know it's ok for someone else to do it.

It may be a financial hardship to make the move early or to pay the care fees to allow the staff to assume some care. Think of it as an insurance policy for your loved one. Paying any insurance policy for years can be expensive and you never know when you might need it. However, this is a short-term insurance policy where the benefit far outweighs any financial sacrifice.

If you would like to learn more about how to have a successful transition to senior living, there will be a free presentation at Watercrest Spanish Springs, 930 Alvarez Ave, Lady Lake, FL on February 27, 2024 at 2:00. Seating is limited, so please reserve a seat by calling 352-320-5185. To learn more when additional presentations will be scheduled throughout the year, call Janice Martin at Senior Liaison of Central Florida at 352-477-1866. Copies of "The Complete Guide to Assisted Living" will be available at a reduced price.



Janice Martin is an author, educator, and specialist on senior living options and the owner of Senior Liaison of Central Florida Inc. She assists families in locating senior options and communities and has written "The Complete Guide to Assisted Living: Everything You Need to Know Before, During, and After a Move" available on Amazon.com. For more information, call 352-477-1866 or visit www.seniorliaisoncfl.com.



352-477-1866 | seniorliaisoncfl.com
seniorliaisoncfl@gmail.com