



The Paralyzing Fears When Facing Important Decisions for Care - Part Two

By Janice Martin, Owner of Senior Liaison of Central Florida

When accepting there's a need for assisted living for a loved one, there are situations that can become overwhelming and hinder the ability to make decisions. I refer to it as paralysis and I've identified four types that will delay progress at the expense of your loved one. Last month, I addressed two types – Financial Paralysis and Analysis Paralysis. This month I'll discuss the remaining two.

INFORMATION PARALYSIS

When I meet with families searching for assisted living to understand their care needs, financial situation, and location preference, I can narrow the search to no more than two or three assisted living communities. Before starting Senior Liaison, I was working as a Director of Sales in senior living. There were times when multiple members of the same family would visit me with notebook in hand and a list of questions that did not help to differentiate what made one community different from the other. They would tour ten or more communities to determine what was the perfect choice. In the end, it was impossible to remember one community from the other only to find that there is no such thing as perfect. They were also relying on the promises that can be made by managers regarding care. Sadly, families don't know how to verify those promises other than unreliable online reviews. They were making decisions based on 1) how the community looked, 2) the food, 3) what the room was like and, 4) if they liked the sales person. On top of that, they planned to take their loved one to 3-4 places to let THEM choose and give their approval.

They were experiencing information paralysis. Too much information. Too many communities. Too many people involved in the process. Remember – 1) Even the newest and most beautiful community can have terrible care while an older community could have wonderful care. 2) The food might be great when you visit. But, the day AFTER your loved one moves in, the chef could quit! 3) If you choose an apartment and later decide that it's not the right fit for any reason, you can always request to move to another one in the community! And, 4) The sales person is not providing the care and there is frequent staff turnover.

By working with a professional such as Senior Liaison, we can understand your individual needs and discern the appropriate communities to suggest. We also research reputable resources to obtain any complaints that may have been reported regarding care



concerns and how often complaints may have been made. We will happily provide a comparison spreadsheet and accompany you on tours, allowing for a confident choice.

GUILT PARALYSIS

The guilt that comes after making a promise to "never move me to one of those places" or "'til death do us part" is enormous. But those promises were likely made long before the current situation. Ask yourself if they would have asked if had they known then how great their care needs would become and the toll it's taking on you. It's also likely they never visited today's assisted living communities and had a terrible nursing home experience years ago.

There is also the adult child's guilt and fear of making their mom or dad mad at them. That may indeed happen, but I am confident they will move past it. Additionally, many men don't want to be perceived as a failure to their family or friends. I received a call from a son trying to find care and safety for his mother diagnosed with advanced dementia. His father refused to agree to place her. They had been married over 60 years and it was his duty to care for her at all costs – including her safety. I have helped a few husbands who visited the same community dozens of times yet found it impossible to do anything. They had always made big decisions together or their wives made the decisions and they're afraid of making a wrong one. One husband spent months agonizing over placing his wife. Sadly, he waited so long that when he finally did move her, she died within a very short time. This brings additional feelings of guilt that her death may not have happened so quickly if he'd kept her home. It's difficult to understand and accept how late in the disease process they may be.

Too many people insist on waiting for their loved one's permission so they don't feel guilty. I will tell you with absolute certainty that it's highly unlikely that their permission will ever be offered. And if they do agree, they will often change their mind and you'll be back to square one.

It is necessary to move beyond the guilt to do what is in your loved one's best interest for their care and safety. Not to mention your own mental and physical health that is compromised from being a full time caregiver or adult child balancing the needs of your own family while caring for a parent.

Financial, Analysis, Information, and Guilt Paralysis are all very real. The longer you wait and allow the paralysis to distract you from the goal, the harder it will become. And during this time, your loved one's health will decline, making the situation more urgent. Do not wait for a crisis to force you to make that decision! A crisis will not take the burden off of you – it will only add to everyone's stress and the ability to make good decisions.



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