

# ON AGING - TRANSITIONING YOUR PARENT OR LOVED ONE

By Donna Deos

Wow! What a big topic. That is why this one is a ten week course, when many of my others have been only 5 weeks. There is simply a lot to it, which you know very well if you have helped a loved one with a transition or are contemplating doing it.

Where to begin? Well, we begin at the beginning, of course! Which is? Figuring out where they are at. How do you know where to start unless you know what you have on your plate in front of you? What do I mean by this? Well, if they are doing fine living at home now, you can likely start looking at CCRC's or other Independent Living options. However, if you are noticing that things aren't going well at home for your loved one, you may need to consider other levels of care...of which there are many, which is why you will likely need some guidance to save yourself time, energy, money and stress!

Once we have narrowed down where you need to start looking, we evaluate the options. You want to look at a variety of factors here, not just the pricing and location. Most importantly would be the quality of care, naturally, and then the happiness of the current residents.

The third thing we look at is where to look, what to ask when you go and what to pay attention to/for while you are there. The abilities and tactics of the folks providing tours will vary as will their level of motivation to close the sale. All of this will need to be considered in your decision, which is difficult as most of us become enchanted by one particular place or sales person and usually make our decision based on that rather than the full picture.



Along the way you will need to figure out how you are going to speak with your loved one about all of this. After all, they will want a say if they are capable of that. I mean no disrespect in that previous comment. What we find is that often, by the time the adult children are involved in the process or are finally leading the charge, the parents may have an advanced form of memory impairment. At this point they may not be at all capable of making the decision. Visiting one place may completely overwhelm them and shut them down. So, talking with them along the way – hopefully long before any memory impairment sets in is optimal.

Of course, and next, we need to warm them up to the idea. Find out what they are most interested in for activities and amenities and also want types of care, meals and housekeeping, etc. may appeal most to them. After all, to best represent them, you need to know them well and check off as many boxes as possible on their list of wants and needs. It's about them! When you find the place that makes them happy, you will likely find your own happiness as well.

Now, you've found the magic place! It's time to get your ducks in a row. There are likely financial documents and hoops to jump through. You will want to have the advance directives in

order as well. This is when you talk to the attorney and the financial advisor to make sure that everything is set up correctly. This can be really tricky depending on the requirements of the community you select. You need to look out for your loved one above all else. And, you will likely have to realize that if you had thought you were going to have a massive inheritance someday, your view on that probably has to be downsized as well (even if they stay home). Quality care and the peace of mind that comes with it do have a cost.

Once the paperwork is underway you now have to figure out what to do with their lifetime of accumulated "stuff". Good news! There are people who can help with that too. A great emerging field is that of "Professional Organizers."

You are actively putting the pieces of the puzzle together. In the eighth week we work on creating your plan. We also tip you off with some unexpected issues that may come up along the way so you can have the backup plan as well.

Week Nine is all about handling the other people involved. This covers everyone from your loved one, other family members, well-meaning friends and neighbor's right up to the various people in the communities you have visited and/or selected.

The final week culminates with lining up the move or other transition. What do you mean by other transition? Well, not everybody chooses to move. Many dig in their heels and force things to play out another way. You need a plan for that as well that involves going back to the aforementioned steps and revisiting them with another form of attack, like: in-home care, transportation

systems, food delivery, medication delivery and management, ways for them to get exercise and socialization and so on. Yes, it's much trickier than finding a place that handles all of that, and in the long run, it's usually more expensive too.

As I'm sure you have gathered from this outline of what the ten weeks encompasses, we handle it by subject not necessarily by where along the path you will actually need to do a specific item. For example, you will want to be talking with your loved one and the other players in the picture throughout the journey. Plus, you will be including all of those other players in the execution plan as it's not fair for you to be the only one to be doing all of this!

Okay, so there you have it! Ten weeks of "OMG! I had no idea it would be this much work?!" That's why so many people bagel out and decide to just stay put and hope for the best.

The reward to successfully pulling this off is that once you have done the planning and execution, you get to sit back and reap the rewards. You get to be the daughter, son, spouse or whoever you are to your loved one. You are no longer the "only one," the one facing all of the crises alone and punting as you go.

Okay, so that's it for this month. Next month I would like to talk with you about the importance of being a great advocate. Until then, take good care! If you need me, call or email. I'm happy to help.

*Your mentor, advisor and advocate on this journey, Donna*



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