

by Nancy Webre, for The Bulletin

IS THERE A "RIGHT TIME" TO MOVE MY PARENTS?

When is the right time for my parents to move into a retirement facility? In reality, there is no "right time" for someone to move into a retirement setting. Everybody wants their parents to live independently as long as possible, but the ability to care for one's self and make good decisions can slowly decline. It is important that adult children be able to recognize when their parents need additional help. Many seniors have unrealistic beliefs about taking care of themselves for the remaining years of their lives. That is where their children or other family members can be instrumental in identifying the problem and instigating change. How do we talk to them about the realities and dangers of staying at home once their health is failing? How do we convince them that a move to a retirement or care facility, such as assisted living or a foster home, could be a positive option? Each family situation is different. Some of the following questions may help you determine if your parent or loved one is ready for a move:

- Does your parent wear the same clothes when you visit, or do they wear the same ones over and over? Can they groom and bathe themselves regularly and adequately?
- Have falls become a problem recently? If so, are they willing to use a quad cane or walker?
- Do they have and use necessary safety equipment such as grab bars, shower benches, and emergency response systems?
- Is your parent able to take medications correctly? Right doses at the right time? Have medications expired?
- Is their house as neat and clean as it used to be? Are there stacks of unpaid bills lying around?
- Is your parent eating properly? Have they suffered recent weight loss or dehydration or are they refusing to eat?
- Are they able to operate appliances safely? Do they remember to turn appliances off when they are finished cooking?
- Do they have a plan in place to contact help in case of an emergency? How does your parent respond to an emergency?



Open, honest, and regular discussions with your parent are an essential first step when you are trying to decide if moving a parent to a new living situation is the right thing to do. Start talking early, before a crisis. Early conversations that explore and plan for the "what ifs" can be beneficial when that "right time" arrives. Family meetings with your parent, siblings, and other key family members allow everyone to share their views and decide how best to proceed. Open communication among family members is a building block for a strong support system for a parent and all family members involved.

Most people don't want to move from their home into a retirement facility. However, in some situations, it may be the best option to keep aging parents or loved ones safe, secure, and healthy. Making the decision to move a parent is one of the most difficult and heart-wrenching decisions of your life. However, if you show them you are genuinely concerned about their well-being, it can make all the difference in the decision to make a move at the right time.

- Do you see your parent as an increasingly more limited person who needs some help? If they have help, are they increasingly dependent on assistance with eating, dressing, and bathing?

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