

# You and Your Aging Parents

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## Common Concerns Common Sense Solutions

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### *About the Author*

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This brochure is intended to help you understand the different housing options available to seniors. Today, there are a variety of ways an older person can live happily and even independently with the support they need or want. Start by exploring the options.

# The “Sandwich” Years

As a child with an aging parent, you may be one of the millions of adults who are faced with caring for a parent as well as caring for your own children, or perhaps grandchildren. Thus, calling these the “sandwich” years is highly appropriate. Facing your own midlife issues, work and family responsibilities coupled with dealing with an aging parent can be difficult. Are these stresses and concerns with your parent taking a toll?



**Ask yourself the following questions regarding the present and not-too-distant future:**

Yes No

- Am I concerned about my parents' capabilities as well as their limitations?
- Would it ease my mind to know that if they can no longer do heavy house cleaning, somebody might be there to do it for them?
- If my parents have some minor medical problems, would they be properly monitored in their own home?
- Am I concerned that they are not eating properly?
- When they drive, do I believe it's unsafe?
- Would knowing that transportation is available to the store and doctors' appointments be a tremendous relief to my parents and me?
- Are my parents and I concerned about their personal security?
- Do my parents worry about finances?
- Would my parents like to move in with me? Would we be comfortable with this arrangement?
- Do I feel my parents would have broader interests and focus more on the positive if they were around more people more often?
- Am I anxious about my parents being alone in case of an emergency?
- Would I feel relieved to know that if they suddenly became ill in the night, someone would be there to respond and get them help?
- Do my parents live out of town, and I feel helpless to assist them?
- Am I putting strain on my own family by trying to meet my parent's needs?
- Would a different type of housing arrangement be a positive move for them?

# Your Parents' Point of View

Most aging adults have very strong feelings about maintaining their independence. And rightfully so...they've lived through many major events, handled life crises and personnel setbacks for many years. Respecting this and acknowledging your parents' ability to be a part of a major lifestyle decision can go a long way toward insuring both their personal happiness, as well as your own peace of mind.

Most seniors want to maintain their independence. This is a healthy, positive outlook. Certainly, they should live as independently as possible. Often, however, it is this very need to be independent that can lead to difficulties. Often we find that older people have difficulty maintaining a house while still managing to enjoy their retirement. It is at this point that many seniors start looking for some alternative housing arrangements.

Your parents may put up barriers to making such a major lifestyle change largely due to outdated perceptions of the options open to them. Options have changed tremendously over the past years. Non-nursing options, such as independent living and assisted living, actually enhance the rewards and fulfillments of retirement.

Your parents may feel strongly that there is no reason to explore these other options. Continuing then to do so may, in fact, be a challenge. However, it is possible. The best for both of you is now available. Start by sharing this brochure with your parents and make the discovery together.



# What's Best For Both of You

If you answered “yes” to several of the preceding questions, you’re probably feeling what experts in aging call “sandwiched.” It’s likely that a senior retirement housing option could provide the peace of mind needed by both you and your parents. Maybe it’s time to take a closer look.

It can be hard to know where to look first. Today, there are many options to meet the needs of the aging. Which one is best for both of you?

## Independent Retirement Community

In the last decade, independent retirement communities have sprung up in cities and towns all across America. The services and cost vary widely; but, in all cases, their purpose is to provide an environment that is compatible with the older person’s lifestyle. People living in such a community are capable of living independently and require little or no assistance. Choosing an independent retirement community requires careful planning. The choice must be made early while the senior is still enjoying good health and an active lifestyle.

## Living With Family

If you’re considering this option, there are several things to discuss with your parents. For instance, do all family members get

along with each other? Is your home designed to accommodate your parents’ needs? Can you handle their healthcare requirements on a daily basis? Do your lifestyles complement each other? On the positive side, you and your parents could learn a great deal from this experience and find it deepens your relationship. However, sharing a household may not be the best option. In some families, it results in unhappiness for everyone involved. This decision should not be made hastily.

## Maintaining Current Living Arrangements

Even with so many housing options offering so much to enhance the older person’s retirement years, many older people choose to stay in their current home. When the need arises, attempting to add comfort and services or to maintain the status quo frequently does not succeed. Home support services, while available, often fall short of meeting all of the physical and emotional needs of both the older person and his/her children.

## Home Health Care

Home health care covers a broad range of areas from housekeeping to full-time, at-home, nursing care. Options include assistance with the daily activities of life,

such as bathing dressing, meal preparation, monitoring of medication as well as much-needed companionship. For those who desire to continue living in their home and can afford the cost of such services, home health care may be an attractive option.

### **Adult Day Care**

This option can be attractive for the children, living with aging parents, who must be absent from the home during normal working hours. It also offers the older individual an opportunity to enjoy a break in routine, meet new friends, and enjoy a meal away from home.

Transportation to and from the facility may be available.

### **Respite Care or Short-Term Stays**

When an aging parent becomes temporarily ill and is in need of more care than can be provided at home, or should a caregiver desire a vacation or be unable to provide care for a brief period of time, respite care or short-term stays offer an ideal solution.

### **Assisted Living or ‘Supportive’ Living**

When an individual does not need full-time nursing care but may require some assistance with the activities of daily living, such as bathing, dressing, and monitoring of medications and nutrition, an assisted living program is an excellent option. Such a situation allows the person to remain in the privacy of their own home, or

retirement apartment, with on-call assistance available from a trained professional staff. Assisted or ‘supportive’ living can provide a sense of dignity and independence. Meals and activity programs are an added benefit of an assisted living environment.

### **Full-Time Nursing Care**

This is an extensive form of care offered in a nursing home setting and is designed for those requiring some form of supervised medical care and nursing assistance.

Skilled care is designed for those requiring 24-hour licensed nursing supervision and around-the-clock assistance.



# What to Look For

With so many options, the decision can be difficult. It's important for you and your parents to discuss what will make their retirement more enjoyable and rewarding, as well as comfortable, convenient and secure. Once this has been determined, experts suggest you explore several options, ask questions and consider the following factors:

## Yes No

- Is the management experienced?  
Do they have a genuine concern and respect for the residents?
- Are the residents and families happy and satisfied?
- Is the staff friendly and caring?
- Is the community clean and comfortable?
- Is this a place children would like to visit?
- Are the services and amenities offered appealing to you?
- Are residents involved in selecting activities?
- Are health and wellness services available?

## Yes No

- Are the meals appealing and delicious, as well as balanced?
- Are there a lot of activities planned?
- Are there craft and hobby rooms?
- Is there a library, barber/beauty salon on-site or nearby?
- Is scheduled transportation provided?
- Is the residence close to you and your family?
- Do the services and quality of living meet your standards?  
Are they reasonably priced?
- Will the option selected meet current as well as future needs?

If you've answered 'yes' to a significant number of questions on the pages of this guide, then it's time to explore the many options available to you. Don't wait too long. You and your aging parents can make the best common sense solutions when you're well informed.