



## **10 Tips When You Live far from Mom and Dad**

### **1. Talk to Your Parents**

Your parent's may already have a plan. Treat them with respect, listen to what they're saying or not saying and do what you think they would want for themselves. The point person, the one your parents listen to, is the one to start the conversation. Be proactive and star the conversation early - before a crisis occurs.

### **2. Appoint One Person**

Designate one person to be in charge of care, communication with professionals and family as well as be the final decision-maker. This person will help keep track of the doctors, medications, and information dissemination. There is no need for the entire family to call to get more information on mom and dad's care.

### **3. Meet the Neighbors**

If your parents are going to remain in their home and don't have constant care you may want to ask the neighbors to check in on mom and dad once in awhile. These would be neighbors you know and trust. These neighbors may also want to help out and do some tasks to help the family such as shovel the driveway and walkways, pick up the mail and newspapers, etc.

### **4. Phone Tree or Email Group**

Put together a phone tree or email group of people that need to know what's going on. These people can then be updated easily. The neighbors should have the point person's information for emergencies and updates.

### **5. Expect the Unexpected**

Many families think that nothing bad will ever happen to their parents or they are in denial that their parents have any issue at all. "Stuff" happens. Your parents can be doing great, living independently or having minor care at home and then a catastrophe occurs. Make sure you have plans in place for these "just in case" moments. Know what they want ahead of time.

## **6. Your Parents May Not Want Help**

Yes, parents can be stubborn. I've heard "I'm never moving. My kids will have to take me out of here in a box" more times than I'd like to remember. Sometimes parents aren't always right or don't always make the best decision due to fear of change. If your parents have full capacity there is not much you can do. If their capacity is diminished and they can no longer make decisions for themselves you can make decisions for them only if you have Health Care Power of Attorney. If you don't and your parents need someone to make decisions for them then you have to hire an elder law attorney to help you apply for guardianship.

## **7. Outside Resources**

There are many services in place to help a senior age in their home. There are nutritional projects, transportation assistance and government support programs. If these services aren't enough then you can always hire a geriatric care manager to help your parents with bill paying, visits to the doctor, etc. Geriatric Care Managers are paid by the hour for oversight of the seniors care needs.

## **8. Senior Housing**

If your parents need to transition to a new lifestyle contact an eldercare resource company to help you find the best senior housing option for your family. Companies like A Silver Connection will reduce your search from hundreds of companies to a few. Using the seniors personal information such as physical and medical issues, budget, location requirement, amenities sought, etc. the company can find options for you. You then tour the communities referred to you and reduce the list to two options. Then, if your parents are able, your parents can tour those two communities and then pick the one they like the best.

## **9. Moving**

If your parents need to move and you don't live nearby or cannot assist them with their move you can call upon a senior move manager to manage the entire moving process. When hiring you need to make sure the company has liability and workman's comprehensive insurance, they use regular employees and they have been in business for a long time. You do not want to be one of the first families they've helped when you're not close enough to monitor them.

## **10. Decision Making**

Sometimes parents don't make decisions out of fear. That's when the adult child should step in to help them come to a decision about their care or senior housing needs. This will be a very emotional time and guilt and anger are natural feelings that may creep up on you. This is normal but doesn't let your emotions make decisions for you. Base all of your decisions on need and what's best for your loved one.