

Transition Times

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About Senior Transition



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MISSION:

To provide positive lifestyle change assistance to an aging population and their families by helping them secure proper housing to meet individual needs, while managing the process of moving to their new homes.

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How to Prepare for a Later Life Move

by Sue Ronnenkamp

PLAN AHEAD! It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark.

Are you at a point in your life where you're starting to think about making a later life move from your long-time home? If you are, congratulations! You're ahead of the pack already, since very few in our society are planning for their later life transitions.

Proactively making a later life move indicates that you understand that this phase of your life is different from those you have already experienced and that you need to plan for this accordingly. This move is a major transition marker signifying the crossing of a threshold into the next phase of your life. Prepare for this as

The Spring issue of *Transition Times* focuses on being PREPARED. To prepare is defined as to make ready, to make things ready, to make oneself ready

A philosophy of Senior Transition is that you never plan too soon, downsize too soon, move too soon. Only too late!

We at Senior Transition submit the following articles for your review with the hope that you will gain insights into your new life.

— Patricia Cusson, R.N., Owner

you prepared for other major life changes – like leaving your parents' home as a young adult, marrying and

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A Guide to Assisted Living

Assisted living is the long-term care option that combines housing, support services and health care, as needed. Seniors who choose assisted living enjoy an independent lifestyle with assistance customized to meet their needs and benefits that enrich their lives and promote well-being and family connectedness.

Assisted living facilities are appropriate for someone who needs some level of assistance with meals, medication, mobility, bathing or other challenges. More than one million Americans live in assisted living facilities.

The Assisted Living and Facilities Association (ALFA) publishes a guide that defines what consumers can expect from assisted living facilities and includes suggestions for locating communities and a checklist to use when visiting and evaluating a new

home for yourself or a loved one.

How to Find A Residence

There are several ways you can find a residence.

You can call ALFA at (703) 691-8100 for a list of residences in your area or you can visit the consumer section of ALFA online at www.alfa.org. You can call the National Elder Locator, a public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging at (800) 677-1116. You can contact your local or state agency on aging, generally listed in the blue pages of your phone book, or search online at www.n4a.org. You can check your local library for directories of retirement communities.

Things to Look For

AFLA encourages seniors and their

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having a family, having your last child leave home for college, or retiring from your job. Plan for a gradual adjustment and transition into a future time when you may need more direct support and assistance.

There are several things you can do to start planning and preparing for your later life move. The further ahead you start preparing, the better off you will be personally, and the more successful your move will be.

Check out the housing options in your area.

There are currently many good options for older adults to choose from, thanks to the senior housing industry's efforts to increase the number and variety of senior residential communities. You might also consider other options, such as moving to an apartment or condo. The focus of your housing selection should be a place that is smaller and more manageable, with less responsibility for maintenance. You should also consider options that afford you some available support and assistance, as well as opportunities for interaction with others. Call a variety of the housing options and senior communities in your area, request a tour, meet the staff, ask questions, meet some of the residents and ask them questions. Do as much as you need to in order to get a clear picture of your available choices.

Start preparing psychologically for your move.

Experts believe that a move brings emotional stress equivalent to that of

retiring, starting a new job, or getting a divorce. Some think that moving later in

Patricia Cusson, owner of Senior Transition,
helps a client pack for the big move.

life is even more stressful and rank this change second only to losing a spouse. I agree that a later life move requires special care and preparation, especially if you haven't moved in a long time. It's also true that moving is NOT something to be taken lightly, but I don't believe that it has to be the major trauma many make it out to be. Proper preparation, along with allowing enough time to get through this experience, can help immensely with this transition.

Start sorting through your belongings.

This is the BIGGEST JOB you will face with a later life move, so you can never start too early. There are several key points to keep in mind with this part of your transition. First, try to think of this as a natural process of completing and releasing, like leaves falling from the trees in autumn. Second, allow plenty of flexibility and time for this step. Sorting through your belonging is like a treasure hunt. Take time to savor the memories and to mourn your losses. Third, do NOT start with the idea of how much you can take with you to your new home.

Rather, think about which of your belongings are really important to you and focus on creating your new space around these key items. Simplicity – not clutter – should be the essential ingredient in a later life move.

Consider the idea of honoring and valuing the life cycle.

One of the special challenges and opportunities of the later stages of life is learning the value and importance of interdependence and dependence – wanting and needing support as we age. If a person lives through the entire life cycle (as many today are doing by living into their 80s, 90s, or 100 or greater), most will once again need some form of active support and assistance to function each day, as we did in the early stage of life. Start thinking of this as a good thing. Having our needs change as we age is as natural as the cycles and seasons of the year. And remember that the greatest part is that we can still give of ourselves, whether we are providing help or receiving help from others.

As Groucho Marx once said, "Growing older is something you get to do if you're lucky." Value this season in your life and allow yourself the possibility of getting excited about this time of change because of the opportunity the new holds for you. This might be the best move of your life!

Sue Ronnenkamp is a nationally recognized expert in the area of later life, transitional moves. She is the founder and owner of Living Transitions, an Austin, Texas-based business that provides "hands-on" help to older adults making downsizing moves. For more information, check out Sue's website, www.livingtransitions.com, or call Sue at (512) 407-8488.



A Guide to Assisted Living Continued from the cover...

families to take into account the following characteristics when choosing an assisted living facility:

- It offers cost-effective, quality care that is personalized to the individual's needs
- It fosters independence for each resident

- It treats each resident with dignity and respect
- It promotes the individuality of each resident
- It allows each resident a choice of care and lifestyle
- It protects each resident's right to privacy

- It nurtures the spirit of each resident
- It involves family and friends in the planning and implementation of care
- It provides a safe, residential environment
- It makes the assisted living resident a valuable community asset.

MEDICINE CABINET MAKEOVER

Cleaning Out Your Medicine Cabinet Could Save Your Life

Need to downsize your medicine cabinet, but don't know where to start? If your medical holdings include tubes and bottles that are several years old, the first step is to discard them.

"Some medications change over time, losing their potency or turning into toxic compounds," says Jodi Jacobson, senior pharmacist at the University of California, Irvine, Medical Center. "For example, if common antibiotics such as tetracycline degrade, they can cause life-threatening skin disorders."

Jacobson points out that all prescription drugs have expiration dates on their labels. Over-the-counter medications have this information stamped on the package. Can't find the expiration date? This may mean that you purchased the medication before the expiration-date law was enacted in the mid-1980s. "Anything without an expiration date should definitely be discarded," says Jacobson.

If you can't remember what a prescription was for, you should also toss it, even if its expiration date is still good. "Once an infection has cleared, any antibiotics should be discarded immediately," says Jacobson. "People who self medicate using leftover antibiotics can build resistance to the prescription and mask the symptoms of their new problem. Furthermore, any old medications given to friends or family members can cause serious allergic reactions."

Jacobson cautions again throwing old medications in wastebaskets, where they can endanger children and pets. Instead, they should be flushed down the toilet.

Out With the Old

The next step is to get rid of anything that's cracked, chipped, ripped, dirty, or just worse for wear. Now is the time to dispose of adhesive tape that's turned yellow and sterile gauze in tattered packages. Ditto for pills that are powdery, syrups that have separated, bottles with unreadable labels and any medicine that's changed color or developed an odor. You should also examine any tweezers and scissors in your medicine cabinet, making sure they're still in good working condition.

In With the New

Now, it's time to restock your cabinet. To prepare for minor mishaps and colds, you should consider purchasing the following supplies:

- Acetaminophen, aspirin and/or non-aspirin pain reliever
- Activated charcoal
- Antibiotic cream
- Antacid
- Anti-diarrhea medication
- Antiseptic solution to clean cuts
- Bandages, gauze and adhesive tape
- Calamine lotion
- Cold and cough medications
- Cold pack
- Cotton balls and swabs
- Eye wash
- Laxative
- Petroleum jelly or other lubricant
- Scissors and tweezers
- Sunscreen
- Syrup of ipecac
- Thermometer

Keeping Medications Safe

Your bathroom and kitchen are the worst places in the house to store medications. "The heat and humidity in these rooms can quickly degrade over-the-counter and prescription drugs," says Jacobson. For example, uncoated tablets such as aspirin and chewable amoxicillin break down quickly when exposed to moisture. Jacobson suggests that all medications be kept in a cool, dark place, away from sunlight, heat sources and children. And, although child-proof caps may make it difficult for youngsters to open containers, Jacobson recommends keeping medications under lock and key if little ones are around.

Read the Small Print

Make sure to read the instructions about when and how to take your medicine, including over-the-counter preparations. This will ensure that you use them properly. For example, if you combine certain laxatives with milk, you can dissolve the pill's coating before it gets to the lower intestines, where it does its work. The result: Possible stomach irritation and discomfort, plus poor results.

Transition Tips

The Law of STUFF

Useless stuff crowds
out the good stuff

Stuff takes on value
when it is used

Stuff loves to stay
where it landed

Dust loves stuff

Stuff expands to fill
an empty space

Stuff becomes
invisible over time

Stuff has a powerful
effect on your mind

Stuff breeds

STUFF does not make you happy... You do!

