



Making Changes

For older adults and their loved ones

Preparing Yourself for Change

Whether you're considering home care services or relocating to a retirement community, planning your future housing needs often runs hand-in-hand with facing up to some loss in your level of independence. Understandably, the prospect of losing independence can be overwhelming for many older adults. It can bring with it feelings of shame, embarrassment, fear, confusion and anger.

But it's important to remember that you're not alone in this. Most of us over the age of 65 will require some type of long-term care services. And there's nothing to be ashamed about in admitting you need more help than you used to. After all, we've all had to rely on others at some point during our adult lives, be it for help at work, home or vehicle repairs, professional or legal services, or simply moral support. For many of us, independence is recognizing when it's time to ask for help.

Coming to Terms with Changes in Your Level of Independence

It's normal to feel confused, vulnerable, or even angry when you realize you can't do the things you used to be able to do. You may feel guilty at the prospect of being a burden to family and friends, or yearn for the way things used to be. By acknowledging these feelings and keeping your mind open to new ways to make life easier, you'll not only cope with your change in situation better but may also be able to prolong other aspects of your independence for a longer time.

- **Communicate your needs with family and loved ones.** It's important to communicate with family members your wishes and plans, and listen to their concerns. For example, long distance family members might think it's better for you move close by so that they can better coordinate your care. However, you might not want to uproot yourself from your community and friends. Similarly, just because you have family close by does not automatically mean they will be able to help with all your needs. They may also be balancing work, their own children or other commitments. Clear communication from the outset can help avoid misunderstandings or unrealistic assumptions.
- **Be patient with yourself.** Losses are a normal part of aging and losing your independence is not a sign of weakness. Allow yourself to feel sad or frustrated about changes in your housing situation or other aspects of your life without beating yourself up or labeling yourself a failure.
- **Be open to new possibilities.** Your loved ones may offer suggestions about senior housing options or other ways to make your life easier. Rather than dismissing them, try to keep an open mind and discuss the possibilities. Sometimes, new experiences and situations can lead to developing new friendships or finding new interests you'd never considered before.

Monrovia Providers Group

Foothills Resources for the Aging

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www.MonroviaProviders.org



- **Find a way of accepting help that makes you comfortable.** It can be tough to strike a balance between accepting help and maintaining as much of your independence as possible. But remember that many people will feel good about helping you. If it makes it easier, offer to trade chores. For example, you can sew on buttons in exchange for some heavy lifting or cleaning chores. Or return other people's help by "paying it forward." Volunteer your time to help or teach others, while at the same time expanding your own social network.

For Families and Care Partners – Helping a Loved One Cope with a Loss of Independence

It's painful to see a loved one struggling to maintain their home or themselves. Maybe clothes are not as clean as they used to be or the house is getting increasingly messy. Or maybe your loved one is experiencing frequent falls or memory lapses such as leaving the stove on or the door unlocked. While you can't force a loved one to accept help or move home, unless they are a danger to themselves or others, you can provide them with information and reassurance. Don't take it on alone. Brainstorm with other family and friends and talk with your loved one's medical team. Sometimes a senior will listen more to a doctor, care manager or other impartial party.

- **Explain how care may prolong independence.** Accepting some assistance now may help your loved one remain in his or her home for as long as possible. Or if your loved one considers an assisted living facility now, for example, it may negate the need for a nursing home later on.
- **Encourage your loved one to stay active,** maintain relationships with friends and family, and to keep an open mind about new interests, such as trying a day care facility.
- **Suggest a trial run** for home care services or other changes to give your loved one a greater sense of control over his or her situation. A trial run let's your loved one have the chance to experience the benefits of assistance or change in living situation before having to commit to anything long term.
- **Don't expect to handle all care yourself.** There are only 24 hours in a day, and you need to be able to balance your own health, family, work, and finances. Caregiving can start with small assistance and rapidly grow to an all-encompassing task. Getting help is not a sign of weakness. It means you care enough about your loved one's health and safety to realize when the responsibility is too great. Educate yourself about the resources that can help your loved one, and see if other family members can also help.

Following are some helpful links that have proven useful in navigating through this new chapter in your life. Whether you are a senior seeking help, a child of a senior or a just a friend...there is help. Please feel free to contact a member of **Monrovia Providers Group** or do your own personal investigation of available resources. Here are a few to begin with:

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) - <http://www.aarp.org/>

ACCESS Senior Transportation - <http://accessla.org/home/>

Alzheimers Association - <http://www.alz.org/>

E-Medicine Senior Health Glossary -

http://www.emedicinehealth.com/senior_health/glossary_em.htm

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Local Hospitals - <http://sangabrielvalley-ca.localhospital.org/>

Meals on Wheels - <http://www.mowaa.org/>

Medicaid / Medi-Cal – Applying for government financial assistance - <http://www.dhcs.ca.gov>

MD Health (List of various types of doctors) - <http://www.md-health.com/Types-Of-Doctors.html>

Senior Citizens Resources – U.S. Government - <http://www.usa.gov/Topics/Seniors.shtml>

Veterans Aid & Attendance Benefits -

http://benefits.va.gov/pension/aid_attendance_housebound.asp