

Settling in to Senior Living



PATHWAY
to Living

Tips for a Successful Transition

Easing the Transition

When older adults move to a senior living community, they often worry if they will fit in and feel at home in their new environment.

Pathway to Living Lifestyle Specialists provide guidance to future residents and family members from the first phone call all the way through the transition to community life. They know from experience how to smooth the way for this major lifestyle change. There are steps that older adults and their family members can take—before the move and beyond unpacking—to make settling in easier and more successful.

Involve Your Loved One

Who is the one making the move? If it's mom, then involve her in the senior living selection process from the beginning. Including older adults gives them a sense of ownership and control over the decisions being made that directly affect their futures.

Start by asking your mom which senior living communities she would like to visit. If she has none in mind, research yourself and pick no more than three to reduce feelings of being overwhelmed. Tour the communities together and encourage her to ask questions and be part of the decision-making process at all stages. Adult children often have their own agendas and, although unintentional, older adult's input can get lost along the way.

Create a Homey Space

Moving in and decorating is an opportunity to make the new space feel comfortable and inviting. Start by planning what to pack. Measure the apartment, take photos and videos and request floorplans that include dimensions.

You may need to downsize, but be sure to bring a few must-have items that will make the new space feel like home, such as the comfy reading chair, heirloom dresser or other favorite piece. For the finishing touches, decorate with familiar artwork, family photos and beloved keepsakes.

If family lives close, fill the closet with only the current season's clothing and store the rest at the nearby relative's house. Not only is this a space saver, but it simplifies life with fewer choices for your loved one.

Get to Know the Team

Several people work at the senior living community. Get to know each person and their role, so you'll know who to go to with questions and concerns and be familiar with those caring for your loved one daily.

Ask the team member who coordinated your move to introduce you to key people such as the ones in charge of wellness, culinary, programming, housekeeping and transportation.

Be Honest

Provide complete and truthful information to the wellness team. It is important to communicate openly about your loved one's abilities and needs.

It can be difficult to talk about incontinence, mobility and dementia issues, but the more the wellness team knows, the better care they can provide. The goal is to support independence and dignity and to help each resident be as active, healthy and confident as possible.

Encourage Involvement

The resident's home extends beyond his or her apartment to the entire senior community. Residents get to know their neighbors over cups of coffee, at happy hours and, most often, sharing meals.

Educational classes, fitness groups and outings also provide fun ways to keep active and make friends. Some people may have to push themselves outside of their comfort zone to get involved, while others will welcome the easy access to peers. Community team members can help make introductions and arrange seating at meals to ease the social transition.

Be Patient

Some people take longer than others to settle in at a new community, and that's okay. Try not to be discouraged if your loved one is not off and running in the first week. Extra support from team members and family in the beginning can help the resident become comfortable and happy. In time, most new residents are pleasantly surprised by all the friendly faces around and didn't realize how lonely or isolated they were before the move.

Tell Others

Help your loved one stay connected to former neighbors, friends and family by sending out change of address cards. Share dad's new address, phone number and e-mail. Let others know that they are welcome to drop in for a visit and encourage them to send cards and e-mails. Everyone like to get mail!



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