

# The Next Chapter

“I have many fears and reservations about moving into a new environment.”

## **Overcoming the fear of change.**

Fear can prevent us from making bad choices. It also can just as easily prevent us from making good choices. Since fear thrives in darkness and lack of information, the cure for it is to shed some light on the subject. Research can help debunk the myths and dissolve the concerns of seniors who are considering moving from their family home into a retirement community.

Fear is a very common human reaction when we are confronted with anything new. How often do you hear someone reference the “fear of change,” or “fear of the unknown?”

Actually, fear can be a positive, protective attribute when it keeps us from acting too hastily before we have all the facts. Yet it also can work against us.

Sometimes, fear and change paralyze us, keeping us from making any choices at all, including those that may be very positive for us (and our loved ones). It can even prevent us from doing the legwork necessary to give us the information we need to make rational choices.

The fact is, fear is not our friend if it controls our lives and keeps us from doing things that are beneficial for us, things that we may actually want to do.

## **The antidote to fear is knowledge.**

If you are considering moving from your current home into a retirement community, the best way to keep fear from making your decisions for you is to research your options. Gather as much information about a new community as possible. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain.

## **Do your homework; write your findings and thoughts down on paper.**

- **Begin by contacting the community** (or communities) that are interesting to you. Ask for printed materials. Look at their website. Schedule a personal tour of the community. Take someone along with you, so you can compare notes later.
- **Interact with those who live and work there.** Have a meal with the residents. Share some of your fears, such as retaining your independence and personal privacy, and ask their opinions. Talk to as many people as you can, so you aren't relying on one person's opinion. Talk with the management

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and staff who have the closest contact with residents. Ask to participate in social activities and to attend special events.

- If you are impressed, find out if the community offers a way for you to **spend a night or two** to see what it's like throughout a 24-hour period.
- **Seek the opinions of those you trust.** Consult with family and friends as well as your financial, legal, and spiritual advisors. Start a list of what you like. Similarly, write down any barriers or concerns you have about making a move. Ask yourself if those barriers are real or could be overcome.
- As you go through this information-gathering process, **make a list of everything the community has to offer you**, both tangible and intangible. If you are considering more than one community, be sure to keep good notes on all, so you can compare them. This educational process is important. It's a time for you to gather information, ask questions, and reflect about all that you are learning.
- **Compare the new community with where you live now.** List all of the benefits and drawbacks of moving out of your current home. Then list the benefits and possible drawbacks of moving into your new home. Review this list with the communities, in case you've misunderstood anything. Most importantly, remember, this is your decision.

There's certainly nothing unnatural about experiencing moments of fear when exploring something that's vitally important to your life. Making sure that you are making the right move is the best step to move beyond fear.

Every retirement community you contact should welcome this kind of investigation without obligation. Exploring does not mean you will move. It means you are curious and want to know if this option is one that will enhance the quality of your life.

If you take the above steps, your fears will be replaced by facts. Then you will be in full control of your life. You will be able to make a good, informed decision about what choice makes sense to you.

“I've been absolutely terrified every moment of my life, and I've never let it keep me from doing a single thing I've wanted to do.”

—Georgia O'Keeffe, artist (1887-1986)

## Resources:

Request a copy from Touchmark of the complimentary book, *Right-Sizing: A helpful guide to downsizing and taking control of your life.*

[www.retirementliving.com](http://www.retirementliving.com)

[www.AARP.org](http://www.AARP.org)