

Are Your Parents Safe in Their Home

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One of the most important things that many of us will face as children is helping our parents stay out of a nursing home. Many parents cannot imagine losing their independence, while the children wonder if their parents are truly safe in the home. There is no perfect way to deal with all of the tension between a parent's autonomy and safety, but there are many steps that the parents and children can take now to keep the parent in the home as long as possible.

1. In order to make the home a little more elder-friendly, a safety assessment is a good idea. Consider hiring an occupational therapist to inspect your parents home and suggest ways to deal with safety issues now. Many of the suggestions that have come out of previous inspections include having an emergency response system that allows your parents to call for help with either the simple push of a button or a newer system that will detect when the parent has fallen down and will make the call without a button being pushed.

2. Make sure that all of the "booby traps" within the home are addressed. Such "booby traps" include a slippery shower, slide-prone throw rugs, tempting steps and stairs and even poor lighting. Making sure that many of these traps are addressed ahead of time by installing grab bars, tacking down throw rugs, installing ramps or protective measures on stairs and better lighting can eliminate many of the dangers that may be lurking.

3. Consider installing a smoke and carbon dioxide alarm. Although this should be in every home, your parents might need a more specialized alarm. Perhaps an alarm that not only goes off when a fire occurs, but an alarm that goes off when a pott has been left unattended on the stove for too long. There are even alarms that remind parents to take their medications during the day.

4. Being self-sufficient means being able to not just deal with bathing and moving around the house, but being self sufficient can be something as simple as dressing. You can make sure that your parents clothing is user-friendly by considering velcro instead of buttons or zippers. Many times parents face stiff fingers with arthritis and even putting on shoes or tying shoes can be a problem.

5. Staying connected with your parents is also important. Many regular phones do not provide enough amplified speakers for a parent with a hearing impairment to communicate properly. Additionally, many times the buttons on the phone are too small and if their eyesight is failing they may need a bigger button to allow them better use of the phone.

6. Finally, do not be afraid to look up senior centers and adult day care facilities ahead of time. These organizations have programs that can provide services to or for the benefit of your parents. They can provide entertainment for your parents and many of them, such as our local Senior Services, can provide a Meals on Wheels service to ensure that your parent is getting the proper nutrition. Don't be afraid to hire professionals to help out with those things that you, as a child, may not have the time to do. Many children not only have their personal life to tackle, but then they have to deal with taking care of a parent and it can weigh you down. If you become overwhelmed, you risk illness or injury to yourself and at that point you are no longer any good to yourself or the people that you rely on.