

“For Boomers Only”

Taking Charge

One of the most prominent issues facing the Baby Boomer generation is how to ensure that our parents have the best possible lifestyle experience as they become senior citizens. The expectational differences between the depression-era generation and the “Boomers” are extraordinary.

Sociologists believe that the “Boomers,” whose standards were established in the 60’s and 70’s, will be typified as follows:

- a. They will deny the advent of aging until their deathbed.
- b. They will always demand the highest level of pampering that they can afford.
- c. They will place far more emphasis on living for “me” and living for “now” and will seek out changes that will reinforce this emphasis.

Contrarily, the depression-era generation, whose standards were established in the 30’s and 40’s, are typified by the following:

- a. They readily identify with the negative implications of the aging process as yet one more challenge in a lifetime of significant hardships.
- b. They philosophically accept the limitations of aging and will use those limitations as an excuse to resist change whenever possible.
- c. They believe that whatever estate they have amassed really belongs to their children, and it is therefore their responsibility to limit their living expenses to ensure that they live on earnings only without “spending down” what is rightly their children’s inheritance.

The great challenge in every “Boomer” family is how to bridge the psychological and emotional gap that becomes more and more prominent with the passage of time. As the child of an aging parent, we usually want our parents to have everything that we, ourselves, will probably demand in our retirement years. We want our parents to have the best of everything. What we must remember, however, is that our parents could probably care less about fulfilling our expectation of what is best for them.

To address this dilemma, the “Boomer” must accept responsibility for directing the process of a lifestyle change for an aging parent. A loving but candid dialogue must be established and a number of decision-making goals must be set. The most important objective in directing the process must be to accelerate the discussion to minimize the anxiety that your parent will feel if there are protracted considerations. You must simplify the issues and rifle the focus. To begin your discussions, determine the following:

- a. Is your parent still capable of living in his/her current environment? If so, what can you do to improve his/her lifestyle experience?
- b. Would both you and your parent be more comfortable if he/she was in a community that provides watchful oversight?

- c. Does your loved one need assistance with one or more functions of daily living, such as eating, grooming, or taking medications?
- d. Is your parent becoming withdrawn or reclusive? Is he/she getting proper nutrition? Proper exercise?
- e. Is management of the current household placing a strain on your parent? Is the strain financial, emotional, or both?
- f. In an ideal world, what would your loved one really like to accomplish with the balance of his/her life? How does that vision compare with what you would like to have them do?
- g. What would make everyone in the family happy? Proximity to mom, guest bedrooms, family gathering place, etc.?
- h. Is mom still capable of driving safely, or would she be better served by having someone else provide her transportation?

When you and your family have answered the questions above, you are ready to consult with a counselor who is experienced in all aspects of senior lifestyle transitions. The marketing directors in Parc communities will provide you with a candid and insightful assessment of your family’s situation. Our experience has proven that this discussion is usually more effective if your parent is not involved.

Should circumstances indicate that your loved one would be best served in a continuing care or assisted living environment, our counselors will recommend suitable alternatives. If an active and independent lifestyle is the logical choice, we will explore the benefits of a Parc community or one of its competitors.

In every circumstance, our goal will be to ensure that your family makes the best decision for your parent. By policy, we will never pressure a prospective resident for one of our communities. We hope to be interacting with your loved one for years to come and that interaction must be cordial. We must therefore rely completely on the “Boomer” children to manage the decision process. Your assistance in determining a move date, selecting a suitable unit, addressing the issues of downsizing, and reinforcing the lifestyle decision is essential for the psychological well being of your parent.

As previously mentioned, the most important objective of the entire process is to minimize the amount of time to get from point A to point B. You must always remember that this decision may be the last important one that your parent will make. The longer your family takes to define its focus, the more frustration and anxiety you will place upon your loved one. Be proactive and deal with our parent as a peer. The result can be a positive experience that will benefit your family for years to come.