

SENIOR LIVING

You Don't Have to Dodge the Conversation

By Angela Clark, MBA, RN

Senior living can be a scary conversation for many people while in fact most don't know where to start or even what options are available in their local community.

Today, it's still common for people to still use terms to describe senior living options as "The Home," "Facility" or a "Room" while in actuality senior living communities offer stylish apartment type living with restaurant-style dining including many services such as entertainment, housekeeping and transportation. Today, there are a wide variety of options to meet any social or medical need spanning from true independent living to research based programs that support a better quality of life for those afflicted with an Alzheimer's diagnosis.

The biggest question tends to be "How do I start the conversation with my parents or spouse about researching

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a senior living option before a crisis occurs?" Additionally, the idea of sifting through all the many choices can be a both overwhelming and confusing. After all, this decision will probably be one of the more important decisions you and your family will make - so it is important to do your research and make the best decision that will enhance the aging process.

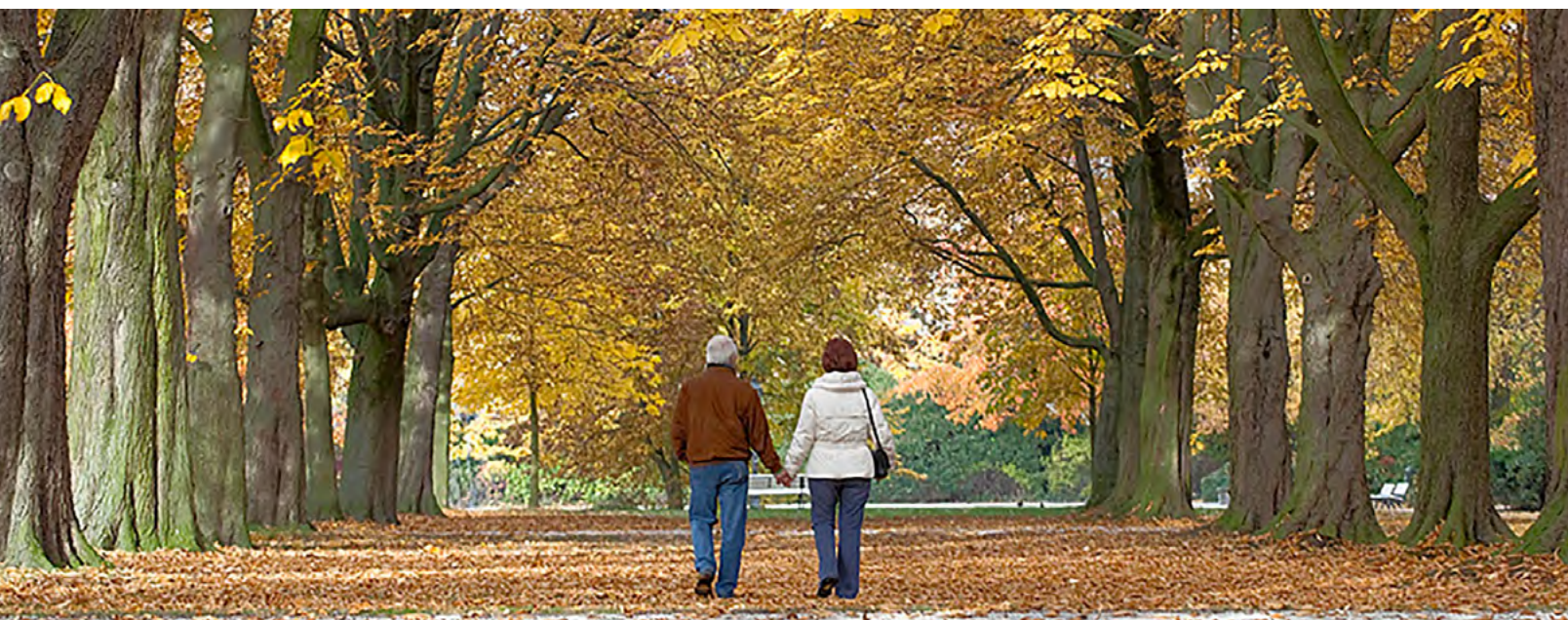
Here are a few tips to start the process:

START EARLY:

Don't wait for a crisis to start the conversation. Plan early and make sure it is an ongoing discussion. In a crisis you will often be rushed to make quick reactionary decisions. Senior Living communities have a lot to offer and you want to be able to take advantage of all they have with their services.

FIND AN EXPERT:

It's always best to work with an expert in senior living - someone who not only knows all the options, but is willing to sit down with you and your loved ones to truly understand the needs and desired lifestyle.



GO TOUR:

Touring senior communities is truly the best way to educate yourself on all the many choices available today. How can you make decisions on something you have never experienced? Many people have a perception of what senior living is. Go experience it firsthand.

ACKNOWLEDGE FEAR:

Making any change often creates fear of the unknown. Seniors often make statements such as: "I am not ready," "I am not moving from my home," or "I don't need that yet." Senior living choices can be as simple as to downsize your home, have housekeeping services, provide socialization, or transportation. Times have changed and these are not "old folk homes." It is important to listen to the concerns of the senior and then address those concerns again when you are visiting communities to keep the conversation headed in the right direction.

FIND AN EXPERIENCE SENIOR:

Engage other seniors you may know that have already made the move to senior living to talk to you or your loved one. Ask them to come with you as you tour your options. If you don't have friends that have made the decision yet, ask the community to match you with like-minded individuals so you can ask questions about their experience. This is the best way everyone can get a great picture of what life can be like in a community.

SPEAK FROM THE HEART:

In the end it is important that your communication states your concern and avoids judgment or criticizing. Share your own emotions and concerns in relation to what you are seeing and feel your loved one requires. For example, "Dad I am really concerned that you are having pain, it's getting harder for you to clean the house and cook nutritious meals consistently. This can really affect your health in the long run. There are some options we can explore that might make life easier for you."

Lastly, it is always important to share that you are concerned and this is about a peace of mind for everyone. The right senior living decision is always an informed one.

Angela Neale Clark MBA, RN is the CEO and Founder of Living Your Choice, a free Placement Company that guides seniors and their families to build a customized plan for senior living options. Angela has had over twenty years experience in the industry and has helped thousands of families. She can be reached at 800-419-9098 ext. 801 or visit www.LivingYourChoice.com

