

When we are faced with the task of helping a family member move to assisted living they may wonder, what will it really be like? There are many parts to the assisted living experience that will be unique to each resident and surely every person will experience this life changing event in a different way.

Many people are reluctant to move because they have a pre-conceived notion of what they are about to experience. It is also common for people to have unfounded fears based on this transition process. Because assisted living communities are a relatively new idea to most seniors, most of what they know is based solely on what they've heard from friends or relatives who are investigating assisted living or are currently living at a community.

Here are some common misconceptions about the lifestyle of older adults living in assisted living communities:

I will lose my independence

In fact many of the residents who live in assisted living find that they are more independent than they were in their homes. They are free from housework, utility bills and cooking. If they were unable to drive and were at the mercy of family and friends for transportation, they now are able to go where and when they want using the transport of the senior housing provider. They are no longer housebound. No one will restrict their activity in any way. If they were caring for a spouse at home, that care is now relinquished to the staff. This will enable them to get back to the activities enjoy.

I will have no privacy

Privacy means different things to each of us. For some, assisted living offers more privacy than home care because no one is lingering around your home waiting for you to need them. The help is there only when you need it. You are free to live undisturbed in your own apartment, with your own private telephone and television. In most cases the mail is delivered to your own mailbox. For your safety, the staff will have access to your apartment; but they must have permission to enter it. Your medical information is kept locked in a clinical file and may only be shared with your written permission.

It will be too expensive

Assisted living is available in many price ranges today depending on how much care you need. It costs thousands today to equip and maintain a private home, even one that is paid for. The property taxes, the maintenance, the groceries and the utilities may in fact, cost more per month than an assisted living community.

I can't possibly live in that small apartment

As we age it becomes harder to maneuver in multiple story dwellings or large homes. We may find that though we occupy a seven room house with a big yard we are in fact only living in one or two rooms; usually the bedroom and the kitchen. Our formal dining rooms, guest bedrooms, and basements become storage rooms and clutter may begin to make life difficult. In assisted living a well designed simple space with a large private bathroom can simplify life and be a great relief, especially if you are visually or mobility impaired. Often there is a large living room, a family dining room and game room right outside the apartment whenever we want to use it. We are no longer searching for things, forgetting what room they are in, running for the phone, and dreading the stairs. It can be the best of both worlds.

I don't want to go to all those activities

It is totally possible to live in assisted living and never go to one activity. Though most people find that even if they don't want to participate in the activity programs, they enjoy the presence of the other residents. You can be alone and not be lonely. The activity programs are all voluntary. Assisted Living is not day camp. You will not be forced to do anything. Many residents find they make friends and after a while do chose to join in.

I will be separated from my life long friends

Many of us find that it becomes difficult to entertain as we age. We may not want to cook or clean. We may be unable to drive to visit them. In this new homelike setting you may invite your friends for dinner, a game of bridge, a birthday party or a concert. In fact, most activities at the assisted living community are open to friends and family. In some communities you may arrange for transportation to visit friends or relatives. Your friends may actually become closer.

The food will be awful

Dining services in assisted living communities vary tremendously. Finding the right fit for your appetite and eating habits will be crucial. The food is fresh, well prepared and snacks may be available 'round the clock. Most people come to assisted living to give up cooking, though you may have a kitchen in your apartment and want to prepare some meals on your own. To insure satisfaction, make your culinary desires known to the management. The food will become less important than the social interaction that brings great fun to mealtime. Life without cooking can bring great freedom.

All the residents are old and sick

Though many people come to assisted living because they are feeling unsafe about living alone at home, most residents are not ill. They may suffer from impairments or chronic conditions but, unlike a nursing home, they are not bedridden or infirm. The age range at each community is different but most residents are between their late 70's and 80's. Although, as people are living longer, we see people ranging from their mid-sixties into their 100's within assisted living. Many residents can be quite youthful regardless of their age. It's important to visit a community several times before choosing to live there. You will feel the age of the population.

When facing the challenge of moving to assisted living try to keep an open mind. You may come to enjoy it in ways you could have never imagined.

Call CHOICE at **800-361-0138** for a free, in-home consultation or guidance by phone or [email](#)

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