

Age Wise

The Family Caregiver's Guide to What to Expect as Your Parents Age



SILVER SOLUTIONS

Chapter 2

Aging in Place - Living Safely and Comfortably at Home

One of the most critical decisions for older adults and their families is where to grow older—at home or in a more suitable setting, such as assisted living. This chapter provides a roadmap to help you evaluate and make the best choice for your loved ones. *[Our next chapter will explore the benefits of community options like Assisted Living.]*

More Than Staying Put

Aging in place means much more than simply staying in the same house—it's about maintaining independence, fostering emotional well-being, and ensuring that the home evolves into a space that supports both safety and comfort. It's a decision rooted in preserving your aging parent or loved one's sense of control over their life and creating an environment where they can thrive as they age.

Every week, Silver Solutions works closely with families to navigate this deeply personal and often complex decision. This chapter is designed to guide you step by step through the process, helping you address your loved one's unique needs and circumstances. With thoughtful planning, simple adjustments, and a focus on what truly matters, your loved one's home can become more than a place to live—it can be a sanctuary of security, happiness, and independence.

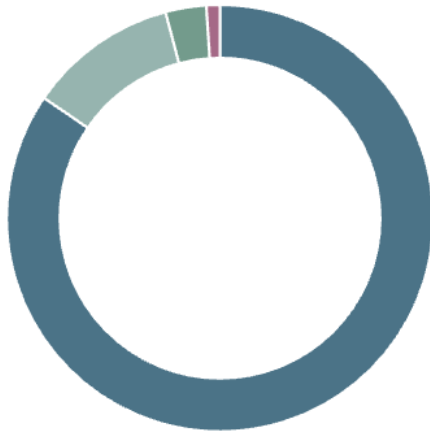
The Choice of Millions

The desire for familiarity, comfort, and a sense of belonging often drives the decision to age in place. It's not just about avoiding a move—it's about preserving a cherished way of life and maintaining familiar routines and surroundings that provide emotional grounding. According to an **AARP** survey, **80%** of adults aged 50 and older express a clear preference to remain in their own homes as they age. This sentiment is echoed in the *Silver Solutions Family Caregiver Survey*, which reinforces that aging in place remains the top choice for most seniors. Whether it's the familiarity of their favorite chair, the connection to their neighborhood, or the memories tied to their home, it's clear that staying in place holds deep emotional and practical value for older adults and their families.

WHERE YOU'LL LIVE

DO YOU EXPECT TO GROW OLDER IN YOUR CURRENT HOME?

SENIORS



82% EXPECT TO STAY IN CURRENT HOME

11% EXPECT TO DOWNSIZE

3% ANTICIPATE MOVING TO ASSISTED LIVING

1% LIKELY MOVE IN WITH FAMILY

Source: Silver Solutions Family Caregiver Survey

Top Reasons to Age in Place

Aging in place isn't right for everyone, but if you or your aging parent or family member is weighing options, here are several reasons why this choice may be right for you:

- **Emotional Comfort:** Familiar surroundings reduce stress and improve well-being.
- **Independence:** Maintaining routines and making personal choices fosters control.
- **Community Bonds:** Staying connected to friends and neighbors reduces isolation.
- **Cost-Efficiency:** Staying home can be more affordable than senior living communities, depending on care needs and location.
- **Personalized Care:** Home care allows tailored support, from occasional help to 24/7 assistance.

Having the Conversation

Discussing aging in place with a loved one can be stressful, but it's an essential conversation that we all need to have at some point. One thing we see often is that empathy significantly influences how the conversation goes. Starting with open-ended questions can help ease the discussion and encourage your loved one to share their thoughts. Try questions like, *"How do you feel about this home? What do you love most about it?"* or *"Are there areas of your home that feel less comfortable or harder to use now?"* Another great question might be, *"If you could change anything to make your home more comfortable, what would it be?"* These questions create space for them to express their priorities.

When raising concerns, focus on observations rather than judgments. For instance, you might say, *"I've noticed the stairs seem more challenging lately. How can we make them easier for you?"* instead of, *"You can't live here alone."* This approach fosters collaboration and reassurance, helping your loved one feel heard and involved in the decision-making process.

Remember, this is often a series of conversations rather than a one-time discussion. Start early—before a crisis arises—and allow time to refine the discussion to ensure their needs are met with care and understanding.

Making the Decision

After your initial conversation, it's helpful to have an objective framework to guide the decision-making process with your loved one. Here's a simple outline to assist you:

1. **Assess physical health and daily needs.**
2. **Evaluate the safety of their home.**
3. **Consider social, emotional, and financial needs.**
4. **Identify support systems beyond yourself.**
5. **Make a pro-con list.**
6. **Create an action plan.**

Creating a Safe and Functional Home

If aging in place is the right choice for your loved one, it's critical that you adapt the home to meet changing needs. A once-comfortable home can become hazardous without

modifications. Risks like falls, emergencies, or isolation must be addressed to ensure staying at home remains a safe option.

Taking practical steps to make a home safe, accessible, and comfortable is essential. The first step is decluttering. Over the years, homes can fill with items that become obstacles, from excess furniture to stacks of books or papers. Eliminating unwanted clutter—clearing pathways, removing throw rugs, and organizing frequently used items within easy reach—is one of the best ways to start.

DECLUTTERING TIPS FROM A PRO

Laura Olivares, Professional Organizer and Silver Solutions Co-founder has helped thousands of families with safe living solutions. Here are some of her top suggestions:

- **Safety First:** Address mobility needs. Ensure clear pathways and easy access to key areas.
- **Start Small:** Focus on easily discarded or donated items. Avoid deep storage areas initially.
- **Set Limits:** Use guidelines like keeping records from the last seven years, clothes that fit, and safe shoes.
- **Sort and Organize:** Divide items into Keep, Donate, or Discard. Label and date containers for memorabilia or important documents.
- **Words Matter:** Use supportive, judgment-free language to guide decisions.
- **Ease Adjustments:** Use temporary labels and improve lighting to help loved ones adjust to their new space.

For more tips on home safety, see Chapter One: Fall Prevention.

Final Thoughts

Aging in place can be a practical, rewarding, and deeply fulfilling choice for many families with an older loved one. While the decision-making process may feel daunting at times, a collaborative approach—grounded in care and ongoing conversations—leads to the best outcomes for everyone involved. If you are also exploring other options, be sure to read our next chapter on assisted living and other community-based alternatives!