



Abigail Van Buren

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Ashland Daily Tidings

Dad was happy alone at home with help of family and friends

DEAR READERS: Yesterday I printed some of the letters responding to "'Grace' in Eau Claire, Wis." (Aug. 2), which emphasized the importance of recognizing when it is time to move to an assisted-living facility before the need becomes critical. Still, there is definitely no "one size fits all" solution to this problem. Read on for some input from readers who advocate carrying on as usual for as long as possible:

DEAR ABBY: Moving elsewhere because relatives think it is in their best interest does not seem necessary for Grace and her husband. After my mom died of cancer, my father, who had dementia, lived alone in his home for five years.

I replaced the gas range with an electric range so there would be no flames to contend with. I had a hospital volunteer service call him every day before 11:30. If he didn't answer, they called me. Because I was employed full-time, I hired a caregiver to make his meals, tidy up the house, take my dad for outings, etc. This was possible because Dad had saved for a "rainy day," and I felt it was starting to pour.

His neighbors watched to see if he raised the shades in the morning to indicate he was up and about. I called and visited as often as I could, as did my family. Yes, he could have hurt himself, but he could also have hurt himself (or been hurt by staff) at a facility, and frankly, he would have been miserable for those five years.

Dad puttered in the garden, pulling flowers as well as weeds. We disabled his vehicle but left it in the garage so he could still see it was there. I realize we were very lucky. But I thought of myself in his place, and made my decision. My brother who lived in another city trusted and agreed with it.

What I am trying to say is, I would do it the same way again, and I would want my children to do the same for me. If I am relatively safe and happy, they can visit me, assist me, check on me, but leave me alone in my contentment. I would not be happy somewhere they consider "safe" but not of my choosing. - EXPERIENCED IN MILWAUKEE

DEAR ABBY: I'm a senior move manager and deal frequently with both sides of the family issue — loving children who want their parents to slow down and be careful; energetic parents who don't want their children telling them what to do.

While some older people are in denial about their abilities, I see many vital seniors who enjoy their independence until their last days (even 100-plus). Their wishes need to be respected much more than they are today. Age used to denote wisdom, but now we assume it brings senility. It does not in most cases.

Grace's family is concerned about her safety and abilities. However, I see too many children consumed with controlling their inheritance and maintaining old family conflicts. - PATRICIA IN GEORGIA

DEAR ABBY: I am single and "only" 62, but I allowed my daughter to influence me into moving from Galveston to Tyler, Texas. I hate it here! I don't feel comfortable and I miss my friends. I see my daughter and son-in-law only once in a great while.

My home was becoming too much, but I certainly could have gotten an apartment in Galveston instead of starting over here. I even gave up my precious Rottweilers.

My solution? I have finally decided to do what's in my heart, and I am moving back to Galveston next month. This has been the biggest and worst mistake I have ever made. - EVA IN THE LONE STAR STATE

DEAR ABBY: Sometimes older adults on a fixed income can't afford the cost of paying home-care professionals. However, most area agencies on aging have programs to assist seniors in arranging services such as housekeeping and personal care that will enable them to remain safely in their own homes. - GERIATRIC SOCIAL WORKER IN MICHIGAN

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