

Senior Matters

By Steven W. Moore, MBA, LNFA, CALM

Holly Hall Retirement Community

Houston, Texas

Assisted Living

Living in a retirement community is not for everyone. There have been so many that have said, "I'm not ready for that yet." When one makes the decision to move into an apartment or cottage in such a community, it has usually been a long process, carefully thought out. Moving into an Assisted Living facility, however, is usually precipitated by a crisis or health issue and involves a much faster decision.

Assisted Living facilities are neither nursing homes nor independent living apartments, but offer homelike settings where trained staff can provide individualized services. Residents of these facilities usually bring their own items and furnishings from home to a small apartment. Care givers can provide assistance with bathing, dressing, incontinence care and personal laundry.

Assisted Living facilities are varied and different. Some facilities are homes of individuals who care for seniors much as a family member would. Others are part of retirement communities, a component of the continuum of care. Still others are large, free-standing buildings, not associated with any other health care facility.

There are several reasons one may consider Assisted Living for themselves or their family member. The most frequent in my experience is a need for someone to assist in managing medications. Improperly taking medications can be dangerous. Taking multiple medications can be confusing and frustrating. Assisted Living facilities can provide assistance with medication management so the senior or their family doesn't have to deal with it.

Confusion and/or memory loss necessitates many to make Assisted Living decisions. In today's busy society, adult children are not always able to assure their elderly parent is safe while alone at home. Nor is it ideal for their loved ones to be isolated most of every day. Seniors with dementia or memory problems benefit from a structured, secure environment where they can socialize with others of similar ages and experiences.

Others have difficulty maintaining their homes, are unable to easily take care of their personal needs or fall frequently. Assisted Living communities provide the assistance needed in such an instance. In addition, interesting activities and wellness programs are frequently offered to stimulate the seniors' minds and bodies.

When seniors need these services and the family has elected to provide them at home, the care givers must take care not to become overwhelmed with the responsibilities. Another wonderful feature of some Assisted Living communities is Respite Care. This service provides the senior a furnished apartment for a short period of time so that the family care

givers can take a break or attend to other matters. The senior receives the same care provided permanent Assisted Living residents and the care givers can confidently take time away from their duties.

Assisted Living is a wonderful option for many of today's seniors. Please contact me at Holly Hall or talk with a resident about why it may be the right thing for you.