

One of the most difficult realities that adult children of elderly parents face is the inevitable shifting of roles. It's not easy to accept that the people you have always relied on for guidance and support are now in need of guidance and support from you. It is a challenge for both you and your parent, one best resolved by talking with your parents well before the need for help is critical, giving them the opportunity to communicate their preferences and wishes for the future.

### **Is It Safe To Stay At Home?**

Adult children need to be attuned to their parents' physical, emotional and behavioral health and pay particular attention to changes in those areas. The changes may be subtle, but significant.

Falls are the leading contributor to hospitalization of adults 65 and older. If your parents are still living in their own home, you can help by removing hazards such as throw rugs and clutter, make sure that lighting is adequate and install hand rails and grab bars where needed.

In-home help with household tasks or nursing care can range from a few hours to 24-hour round the clock care.

### **A Few Words of Advice About Long Term Care**

It is never too soon to research long-term care communities near where your parents live or closer to you if you live at a distance. Websites will give you a good initial overview of services provided, including the availability of rehabilitation and dementia care. These communities also offer their residents opportunities for socialization and an ample range of activities to keep mind and body active.

### **If long-term care seems a good option, keep these points in mind.**

- In addition to assessing your loved ones' strengths and weaknesses, consider what is important to them. Being near family? Community connections?
- Make your loved ones feel like the boss. Involve them in the decision-making. Don't tell them what to do.

- This is a big decision that can't be resolved in one conversation. Talk early and talk often.
- Get siblings on board early. The more everyone feels part of the process, the fewer the conflicts.
- Make sure key documents are in order: power of attorney for handling financial matters; health care proxy, also known as a medical power of attorney, naming one person to make medical decisions if the individual can no longer do so; and an advance health care directive, also called a living will, spelling out the individual's end of life wishes.

Another key consideration: look for a retirement community that encourages family members to take an active part in their loved ones' new lives. Noble Horizons offers many opportunities—informational programs, concerts, and social events—where residents' families are welcome, as well as other occasions designed especially to include families. Noble also has a family council which meets on a regular basis where family members can share experiences and concerns with others.