

How to talk about Senior Housing...

Insights from the Oak Terrace Staff

Understand how older adults see housing

There is common assertion among the elderly to “stay in my own home till I die” because the only other alternative is to go to a Nursing Home. Nursing homes are associated with lack of choice, independence, poor health, and many other negative stereotypes. In a society where independence and self-reliance are emphasized, it is understandable why individuals do not want to go to a nursing home. It is important for families to understand this hesitation and not just brush it off. Respect your loved ones concerns. Also, let you loved one know things have changed. Assisted living and independent living communities have transformed the long-term care industry. Communities across the United States are providing exceptional services and amenities in positive environments that seniors want to be. This is what Oak Terrace is all about. The first thing Oak Terrace does is create a friendship/bond with prospective residents and families, and then we move-on to the “nuts and bolts” of Oak Terrace. YES, there is frequently the comment from an interested party that “this is such a nice place for someone that really needs it.” So our conversations continue.

An Older adult’s home represents control

A majority older individuals have a great deal of identify and security in their home. When you approach this subject with your loved ones, it may sound (in their ears) like you are trying to take away a part of themselves, that they you do not want to take care of them, or worse, that they can’t take care of themselves. We must be respectful of these concerns, and give assurance that moving into an independent or assisted living community is not a loss of independence. Senior communities do not take away an individual’s privacy or self-determination. It does create an environment where more time can be spent in leisure. Oak Terrace strives to provide independence when you want it, and assistance when you need it.

Look at Housing from his/her point of view

Moving into an independent or assisted living community is a significant decision and is often put off to avoid other uncomfortable topics. As an introduction to this type of housing for your loved ones, start chatting about places you have seen being built and asking questions about what they are and what they would do for seniors. When appropriate, bring up the topic of their feelings on living in a senior directed community. Their response may be “It’s nice for people that need it, but I don’t need it.” Again, this is a frequent answer. Stress the positive things that

a community can offer, and that senior communities are not about “need,” they are about living in an environment that promotes independence, activity, community, and health.

Be tactful and gentle

We as children/relatives want to do what is best for our loved ones, but we do not always see eye to eye with our parents. It is our role as children to work as an advocate for our parents, not as an adversary. We can embrace the topic of moving from one “home” to another. We can give reassurance and put the transition in a positive light, but we should not write off concerns.

Assisted living communities are a big change; one goes from sharing a home with a spouse and children to a one or two-bedroom apartment, often much smaller than their previous home. There are changes in the daily experiences of dining, socializing, and activity. Be patient and understanding.

Remind yourself that he/she may come around to the idea

Those of us in middle-age are often surprised by the reflection we see in the mirror, “we don’t look that old, do we?” A popular sign reads, “Young at heart and mind, slightly older in other places.” Are bodies do age, and statistics tell us that a majority of individuals will need assistance. It can be difficult to accept that one would benefit from an independent or assisted living community, but as tasks become more difficult the realization becomes more real. To help your parents see your point of view stress your concerns. What if something happened to you as a care giver and you unable to provide assistance? Who would assist with groceries, doctor visits, laundry, yard work, housekeeping, etc. Independent and assisted living communities can help reestablish relations because it allows families to spend quality time with each other.

Here’s the bottom line

Choosing the Assisted Living Retirement Community that fits your loved ones needs is very important. Tour many communities; find the pros and cons of each. Important factors to consider are location, activities, level of care offered, size of the community, and overall impression. Connecting with the management team, nursing staff, and the personal care attendants is also VERY important. These connections build trust and a feeling of security. A building can be beautiful, but it is the staff and community that will lead to a successful experience.

Finally, the decision to move into a senior community is theirs, not yours. We can encourage, but the final decision to make the transaction must be made by your loved ones. When this does happen, Oak Terrace will be ready to provide a great experience.