

# Making change for the better



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## Looking at long held beliefs

By Julie Cheney

People in their later years often want to stay in their own homes. They are familiar spaces and full of familiar objects. Sometimes, however, the belief that being in the original home with everything staying the same is not a safe nor wholly accurate belief. At times people are more dependent on others in a home where there have been no modifications made or no actions taken to improve the way the person operates within the space. For some, the home might be making them more isolated or more stressed.

It can often mean as much disruption and decision making to improve a home for safety and less clutter as is felt when moving to a smaller and less cluttered home or unit. Either of these options can improve any older person's life, but it's when they **don't** make decisions where problems start.

Being clear about what is important for them as a person, so they can continue doing what they enjoy is a great start. Clarity and keeping abreast of decision making provides older people meaning and a sense of control.

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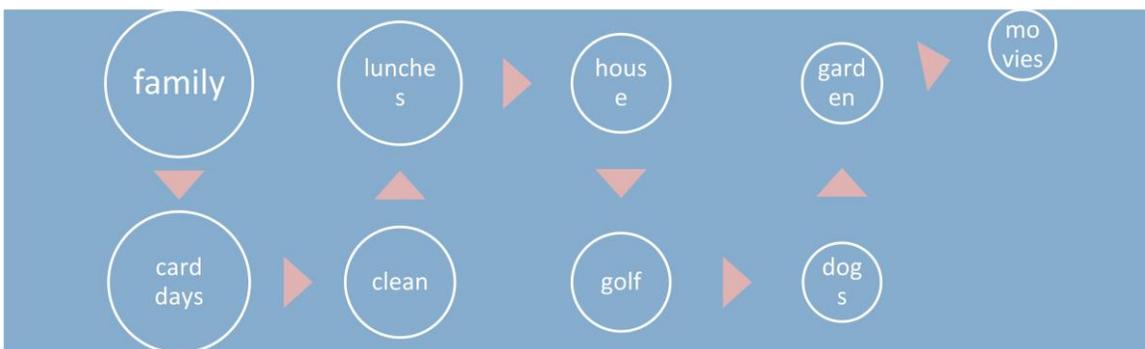


## Making change for the better

# Keep control by early decision making

The more a person can make decisions about their environment, the more they will feel in control of their lives. However, it is important for them to be realistic about how they manage in life and what they need to feel safe and to function effectively. Sticking to a belief that their body will always work the same as it did when they were in their 60's is likely to lead to a point where **nothing** seems to be easy anymore and they constantly need to ask for help when they would prefer not to. Changing things in the environment can reduce those stressors and give back some freedoms.

It's valuable for an older person, sometimes facilitated by a relative or friend, to look at their life and map out what they do, what they would like to do and how safe and comfortable they are with their activities. Such a map can reveal some truths of the impact their home has on their lifestyle. There are no real rules to making a map. It's really about clearly identifying all the things that make up a person's day or week. It's about being honest with themselves about what it takes to live their life as they would wish to. It's about laying out the most important verses the least important, then making clearer decisions.



***“What do you really like to do, and how can that be made easier.”***



## Making change for the better

### Ask yourself

To help get a bit more clarity, try some basic questions to help you to focus.

Picture yourself in a year. Is it likely to be the same as your current picture? Do you want it to be the same? Would you like the picture to be easier, safer, different all together, changed in certain ways?

If your health was to become more impacted in the next few months, how would that affect the things you like to do, the places you like to go, the people you have or need around you?

Do you have all the necessary legal supports in place? For example, the Enduring Power of Attorney for when you can't make decisions for yourself, your Advance Care Planning wishes, your Will or at least a conversation with your family about any legal and financial matters in your life?

Can you get to places you need to safely, with limited stress? Do you need help, transport, a support person to help or make it less stressful? Do you have to go to that place, that activity and what is the result if you don't or can't? (Remember your map of what is important here. Don't decide something is too hard before exploring if it is important to you)

When you do things around the house are they difficult, frustrating, too hard, annoying, or are you just plain over it? Compare these to what you value. Are you spending vast amounts of time and energy on something you don't even like, and if so, is there an alternative?

What risks are there around you given what you like to do and what you need to do? Be honest with yourself regarding the picture you have of your health and functioning. Are you placing yourself at risk of falls or other injuries simply because there haven't been any adjustments made in your environment? Then, if that worse-case scenario were to happen how would it impact on your independence?

Basically, how are you functioning and how could it be made better?

## At Later Years Support

We endeavor to provide useful, practical ways to support people in their later years, and their families. We utilise current evidence where possible, reputable health related sources and decades of experience with older people to guide our information. We offer suggestions that are general in nature and do not attempt to cover all needs of all people, or to be considered the only advice sought for a person's concerns. We recommend everyone seeks professional advice in any circumstance of complex health and wellbeing concerns.

# A checklist to prompt you

<input type="checkbox"/>	Do you have a family member or friend who is carer to do some, all support tasks? What would be fair and appropriate for them?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How often would you need to have someone for the task you need assistance for?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How often can they realistically and fairly attend whenever needed?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Are there alternate people or services you could use for this assistance?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How are groceries brought into the house?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How is the house cleaned?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How is the laundry done, from sorting the clothing, to washing, to drying and storing?
<input type="checkbox"/>	How is your personal hygiene working, health wise and safety wise?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Can and should you be driving? Other people's safety and your stress are relevant here. What other alternatives are there to transport you to various types of activities or events?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is it safe and comfortable to walk inside the house, outside the house, in crowded public areas? Are there hazards in your surroundings?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is there easy contact with others in emergencies?

**IN SUMMARY**

1. Be honest with yourself about how you are managing in your home.
2. Think about the impacts on you and your stress and wellbeing.
3. Compare these with how you would like to feel.
4. Ask yourself some systematic and detailed questions about how you do things and how they make you feel.
5. Consider other ways to do things and changes that could be made to make life easier and safer.