

# *Disability Campaign.org*

## Moving an Elderly Parent to Your Home



Image: Pinterest

Whether it's due to chronic illness, a recent heart attack, or age, your elderly parent may require extra care. Depending on your family situation, cultural or religious preferences, and economy, you may be considering moving your elderly parent into your home. This is a big decision and it's important that in this transition you take certain things into consideration for the well-being of your family, your parent, and yourself.

- 1. Analyze your family situation.** Is your family ready for your elderly parent to move in with you? Family dynamics and individual routines will be affected. If there are current problems such as a troubled marriage or children with behavioral issues, things may get worse or new problems may surface. For some families, moving in an elderly parent may improve family relationships. Whatever the outcome, expect changes. Talk with your spouse and your children, and if possible sit together as a family. Allow everyone to express their emotions, expectations, and concerns. Then, consider how you will address any issues. For example, who will drive your parent to doctors appointments, will the office be turned into a bedroom, or if your children be able to have friends over for sleepovers. Share the plan with your spouse, then with the rest of your family, avoiding dictating tasks while describing the responsibilities of each family member.

2. **What kind of care will your parent need?** Does your parent have a physical condition or a mental condition? Is this a chronic illness that will require long-term care or is it something acute, such as a broken hip or an upcoming surgery, necessitating temporary care? It's important that you understand the illness, medical condition, or disability well before moving your relative into your home. Not only will this allow you to make the necessary accommodations, but this will also help you and your family better meet your parent's needs as well as set realistic expectations and properly address concerns. It's important that your parent have a social network available, not just sit around and watch TV all day.
3. **Be realistic about what you can and cannot do.** Take into consideration stress, your health, job, or schedule at home, as well as your patience and your current or past relationship with your parent. Do not neglect caring for yourself as you become a caregiver to your parent.
4. **Will you need help from others?** The answer should always be "yes," but what kind of help? Will you need the assistance of a paid in-home caregiver? Do you have any siblings or relatives that might be able to assist, such as on date nights or if your children want to go to a theme park? Will your spouse or your children help at home? Are there programs or activities in your community in which your parent can participate (a book club or golfing)? Remember, you cannot and should not do this alone.
5. **Be ready to make modifications.** Ideally, older adults should have a room on the first floor. You may need to install an automatic stair lift or ramp at your front door. Furniture may need to be moved and toys picked up to prevent accidents. If there is no extra bedroom, could you convert the living room, den, or office into a bedroom? Remember to share plans for modifications with your family prior to making the changes. Not everyone may agree or be happy, but it is important to communicate with your family.



Image: AGWilliamsPainting.com

**6. Are you financially ready for this?** Go over your family's finances, as well as those of your parent. Maybe your parent will be able to contribute to some of the financial expenses, such as those associated with renovations, medications, or food. If you have siblings, include them in your conversations over finances. You may have to create a new budget for your family during this time and cut back on expenses such as vacations, dining out, or shopping. Remember, your family will know what works best for everyone. There is no right or wrong way to handle your finances during this transition so long as you keep the lines of communication open.

**7. Reanalyze your family situation.** Once your parent has settled in and weeks or a few months have gone by, talk to your parent, your spouse, and your family to see how everyone is adjusting to this change. If things are not going as expected, see if you can work it out as a family.



Image: Grandparents.com

A counselor or nonprofit agency dedicated to elderly care may offer helpful suggestions or provide professional help. Respite care or daycare programs, your parent's doctor, and even your place of worship may be able to assist you and your family. It may be that having your parent at home is not best for everyone. If this is so, try to not feel disappointed or carry guilt. Remember, you and your family gave it a try, and just because your parent is not living with you doesn't mean that you will not continue to provide him or her love and care.

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P.O. Box 3333, Agoura Hills, CA 91376

[www.joniandfriends.org](http://www.joniandfriends.org)