

AOA National Family Caregiver Support Program

Resource Room



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Because We Care

When Your Care Receiver Lives With You

Introduction

American society is often a muddle of contradictions, and this is certainly true when it comes to families. On the one hand, we cherish the concept of the extended family and laud the ideal of **multiple generation households**. On the other we cherish our privacy and fiercely defend our independence. It is thus important for you, your relative or friend, and other family members to weigh the pro's and con's of living together. This is especially true if you are **working** or have other family responsibilities. You will need to consider these before you enter into an arrangement that may or may not be the best option for you and your care receiver.

Pro's and Con's

It is probably best for everyone involved to discuss what you imagine the pro's and con's of living together to be. Every family's situation is unique. Listed below are some of the benefits and drawbacks that may result. It is important for your relative or friend to take part in the decision, and to be a valued and contributing member of the **family** with meaningful roles, whenever possible.

On the plus side:

1. If your care receiver needs considerable care, you will save the expense of a long-term care facility or, at least, some in-home services.
2. You know that your care receiver is getting the best possible care because you are either providing it yourself or directly overseeing the care.
3. You will be able to make major decisions that can give you a sense of empowerment.
4. You will have more time to spend with your family member or friend.
5. Your children will have an opportunity to spend more time with their grandparent(s) or other older relative, have an important lesson in compassion and responsibility, learn about their roots, and develop a sense of family continuity.
6. If your care receiver is fairly healthy, he or she may help with household tasks, and/or with the children.

On the other side:

1. You may have less time for yourself and/or other family members and if **you work** you may find conflicts between your job and **caregiving** responsibilities. Some



Additional Topics

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- ▶ Caregiving Fact Sheet
- ▶ Older Americans Act

employment versus care giving responsibilities may be relieved, especially in light of the technology revolution that is taking place, where **telecommuting** may now be an option.

2. Depending on **your lifelong relationship**, you may find that you and/or your relative resent changes in your relationship that may take place.
3. You will lose at least some of your privacy.
4. Other family members may resent the new arrangement.
5. There may be less space for everyone in the family.
6. You may find that hands-on caregiving is too physically and/or emotionally demanding.

If you decide that you do want to live together, you might want to try it on a trial basis, if possible. You might consider renting or subletting your care receiver's home on a short-term basis so that he or she has the option of returning home if the new arrangement does not work out to everyone's satisfaction.

You will want to consider what, if any, **physical changes** need to be made to **your residence** and how much they will cost.

Will Intergenerational Living Work in Your Home?

As a guide, you may want to ask the following questions:

1. Is your home large enough so that everyone can have privacy when they want it?
2. Is there a separate bedroom and bath for your family member, or can you create an accessory apartment?
3. Are these rooms on the first floor? If not, can your relative climb stairs safely?
4. Can you add to or remodel your home to provide a first-floor bedroom and bath?
5. Do you need to add **safety features** such as ramps and better lighting?
6. Does the bathroom have a shower, is it large enough to accommodate a wheelchair, if needed, and can safety features, such as grab bars, be installed to prevent falls?
7. Are door openings wide enough for a wheel chair?

You also may want to set some ground rules for privacy.

Sharing Time Together

Obviously, if you want your care receiver to live with you, you will want to share times together.

- Set aside times to talk.
- Involve your care receiver, if possible, in family outings and social events.
- Invite other family and friends to your home, and let them know that you are available to come to their house as well. All of them will not respond, but some will.
- Even errands, such as shopping, can be something of a social event, and give your relative a chance to participate in decision making.

At the same time, you want to ensure that other family members do not feel that they have been "displaced" and that they are as important to you as ever.

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