

# KENDALL GAZETTE

## Ask Helen



### “I’m Not Ready Yet” May Mask Greater Fear

BY HELEN SHAHAM

**Q.** *My parents, both in their 80s, have been living in their home for more than 50 years. Dad recently had some health complications and I’m beginning to worry about them living alone. Whenever I suggest a senior living community, they say “we’re not ready yet”. How can I convince them that it’s the right time to make the move?*

**A.** Talking to your parents about their future can be a difficult subject to broach. Though there may now be a reversal of roles—with you wanting what is best for them—it’s important to remember they are still your parents and their concerns, thoughts and fears have to be both addressed and respected.

The first step to having a productive conversation with them about their future is to be empathetic. Imagine being asked to leave the home in which you’ve spent the past five decades. Think about the anxiety that may come with having to leave special memories and friendships behind.

Additionally, for many seniors, the thought of moving to a senior living community is perceived as a loss of independence. They are unaware that retirement communities such as The Palace Suites offer a variety of accommodations and programs to help older adults remain independent and continue to be active.

Encourage siblings and a few close family members to be a part of the conversation when you’re discussing senior housing options with your parents. Clearly explain that they are there to show concern and

support, not to lecture your parents about moving.

It’s a good idea to request brochures from local senior living communities you think they would like or tour them yourself. Your parents may wish to remain within close proximity to their existing home. This will also help them transition. They’ll still have access to their doctors, favorite restaurants and social circles.

Keep in mind that no matter how receptive your mom and dad are to moving, it’s a decision that cannot be made overnight. They’ll need time to mull on the information you provide.

The key message to get across to your parents during the conversation is that you are not going to make any decisions for them. Actively engage them in the conversation by asking open-ended questions. Ask them their plans for the future and how they will handle another health crisis should it occur.

Mention your reasons for suggesting a senior living community: the availability of assistance with future health care needs, a social life and new friends, freedom from home maintenance and repairs and overall peace of mind. Then, review the senior living community brochures together. Ask your parents to keep an open mind. They aren’t making a final decision; they’re simply exploring the possibilities.

If the communities being considered are anything like The Palace, there’ll be an activity-packed calendar filled with exciting outings and stimulating events and fine dining rivaling some of the best gourmet restaurants to pique their interest.

Once they’ve selected a few communities for consideration, offer to accompany them to tour the communities.

If mom or dad still says they aren’t yet ready to move, suggest they attend an event at the senior living community. At The Palace, for example, our marketing department hosts several low-key opportunities to visit and get a feel for the lifestyle it offers.

In fact, some communities will allow you to live there for a weekend or a few days “to experience life in the community” before making the move. Many have guest suites where you can stay for a few days too. This is an invaluable first-hand experience!

Also, the best advice often comes from the communities’ own residents. Ask the leasing director to introduce your mom and dad to current residents. Your parents will find these conversations to be the most beneficial. They’ll get a far better feel for the community and an idea if they will be comfortable living there.

Having been involved in the senior housing industry for almost 30 years, I’ve found that when seniors say they are not ready to move, there is always an underlying factor: fear of the unknown, fear of leaving their home, fear of losing their independence or another fear. By being empathetic and addressing these concerns, the conversation about future health care and housing needs will be much less stressful—for both you and your parents.

*Helen Shaham and her husband Jacob have been operating retirement communities for nearly 30 years. The Palace Suites in Kendall is a luxury Independent Living Community for active seniors. In addition, The Palace at Kendall campus is home to two Assisted Living Residences and a Nursing & Rehab Center. They also operate The Palace Gardens Assisted Living Community in Homestead, Homestead Manor Nursing Home and The Palace @ Home, a Medicare Certified Home Health Agency. Their two newest projects are The Palace at Weston – luxury living for those 55 and over, and The Palace Tel-Aviv, a continuing care retirement community in Israel. They have two communities under development – The Palace at Weston Senior Living and The Palace at Coral Gables. More information can be found on the company website, [www.thepalace.org](http://www.thepalace.org) or by calling 305-270-7000.*