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Strategies for Aging Well

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Solo aging: Eyes wide open



Even those who are partnered now or have children are wise to consider the possibility of solo aging because, well, things can change ... death, divorce, estrangement. In that light, we are all (potential) solo agers.

Solo agers face the same issues as any other older adult. What makes solo aging different is the need to be more proactive about getting help and therefore more accepting of the need for help.

As a solo ager you need to

- **be very honest with yourself about changes.** Act promptly if you notice something wrong with your health. Denial is not your friend! Especially if you want to age in place, you have to actively address safety concerns (e.g., modifications to prevent falls, implementing a personal emergency response system).
- **be prepared for the possibility of dementia.** Persons with cognitive impairments rarely recognize they are having problems. And you don't have children to notice or bring up the subject. Make a pact with friends to alert each other about any concerns. Meet periodically with an Aging Life Care™ Manager. They know the signs and can advise you when it's time to get an evaluation.
- **actively plan for how to get help.** This may mean moving closer to nieces and nephews (be sure they are on board for supporting you). If you intend to have hired help, Medicare does not pay for it. Unless you have long-term care insurance or qualify for programs such as Veterans Aid and Attendance, you will need to pay privately.
- **assemble a support network of professionals.** Working together, they can be sure you receive the help you need.
 - **An Aging Life Care™ Manager** is an advocate knowledgeable in aging who can help you develop an overall plan based on your specific preferences and resources. They understand the medical, financial, psychological, and social factors that will all come into play. As experts in aging well, they can help you with the overview of what to expect, point you to the best providers, and suggest cost-effective options.
 - **A financial advisor** will help you determine how to achieve the financial reserves you need to afford your preferred aging scenario.
 - **An elderlaw attorney** is required to help you draw up the documents all older adults should have in place: A will or living trust for disbursing your assets; documents naming your health care and financial decision makers should you be unable to make decisions yourself.



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[YOUR PHONE]

ABC Care Management supports older adults in [Your Service Area] as they plan for their later years.

Give us a call at [Your Phone] to find out how we can support you.

Ready to get proactive? We are experts in solo aging.
Give us a call at [Your Phone].

Making friends in later life



We tend to think friendships should grow organically. They don't. Especially in our later years when we often lose friends—to death, illness, or moving away—we need to be much more intentional about making new friends. This is especially so for “solo agers” since children and grandchildren make up a large portion of the average older adult’s social network.

Making friends requires time and effort. Research has shown it takes fifty hours of contact to become casual friends. Bump that to ninety hours for a real friend and 200 hours to cultivate a close friendship. Here are some tips:

- **Look for social activities with repeated exposure.** For starters, it helps to rack up those hours with less effort. But more important, we feel more comfortable when activities and people are more familiar. The only way to get past anxiety is to go *through it*. Regular contact makes the awkwardness of a new situation become familiar faster.
- **Assume people will like you.** Research shows we vastly underestimate how much people like us. If you lean into the idea that you are likeable, you will actually behave in a warmer and friendlier manner. It’s a self-fulfilling prophecy.
- **To get a friend, be a friend.** Notice if someone needs assistance, and offer it. A ride to the airport. A meal after surgery. Helpfulness, support, and compassion rank high among qualities people look for in a friend.
- **Small gestures matter.** Consider a “thumbs up” text when you hear of an accomplishment. Or encouraging words before a challenging event. Even a touch-base “thinking of you” email when you haven’t seen someone in a while can be surprisingly meaningful and open new opportunities.
- **Let people know you like them.** While intellectual sparring and trading jokes can be fun, it helps if you can sprinkle in compliments now and then too. Tell people what you admire about them. We tend to like those whom we feel like us.

Services for solo aging

Just as you would consult a financial advisor for investments and an attorney for legal documents, it’s wise to consult an Aging Life Care Manager about the challenges and transitions of aging. From cost estimates to local recommendations, you can get help with

- **aging in place.** Find out about the unique issues you have to address as a solo and what the costs will be to secure the care you’ll likely need.
- **long-term care.** It may be that group living is preferable. It reduces isolation and the costs of care are less. Find the best match for your values and budget.
- **moving and downsizing.** Sorting through a lifetime of possessions is daunting, emotionally and physically. It helps to have someone who understands and can assist with distribution, packing, moving, and unpacking.
- **on-call medical advocacy.** Suppose you fell and broke your hip or had a stroke. Who would be there for you in the hospital to weigh treatment options, bring clean underwear from home, make sure your cat gets fed, and help you arrange for care after discharge?
- **preplanned surgeries.** Did you know that with the right home care, you may be able to have some surgeries on an outpatient basis and avoid the need for staying in rehab? Learn how you can recuperate safely at home as soon as possible.
- **counseling/coaching about life transitions.** Widowhood. Divorce. Estrangement. Health challenges. Memory problems. Financial worries. Depression and anxiety. Talk with a knowledgeable and caring professional who can help you explore strategies and sort through your options.
- **end-of-life care.** Very few people have experience working with the dying. It’s an intensely personal, emotional, spiritual, and physical life passage. Get the holistic support you need on this last leg of your journey. You don’t have to do this alone.

To learn more, call us: [Your Phone]



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