

CHAPTER 1

THE ASSESSMENT

Studies show that most seniors want to stay in their homes as they age. However, many find themselves alone and isolated as their spouses pass away, or their children move out of state or focus on taking care of their own children. Regardless of the situation, it is important to deal with the challenges of declining health as we all age. The first step is determining options in care and living arrangements for your loved ones is to assess their daily activities.

Assessing the overall situation will allow you to look at their strengths and weaknesses. Seeking professional help from their physician, a social worker, nurse, or case manager can help guide you in putting a plan into action. Receiving financial and legal guidance will help lead to the best decisions available.

Alice, 80, and Jim, 83, have been married for almost 60 years. They've lived in the same house for over half of that time and are hesitant about moving into any type of retirement community. In the past few years, their levels of daily activity have decreased due to mobility issues and chronic health conditions.

Alice tires easily when cooking meals and doing light chores around the house, even with a housekeeper coming in twice a week. She still drives, but only during the daylight, and Jim doesn't drive at all. Her debilitating arthritis and high blood pressure is treated with different medications throughout the day and evening.

Jim had a stroke last year causing him to use a walker. At that time, the family, with the help of Jim and Alice's physician, stepped in and told him that Alice would be doing all the driving. He wears hearing aids and is in early stages of Alzheimer's disease. Jim also has incontinence issues. Alice monitors Jim for fear of his falling while he's showering. On several occasions, she has had to call 911 or a neighbor to come help him off the floor, since she isn't able to lift him herself.