



Moving in with Your Adult Kids?

Practical ways to make it harmonious . . . for everyone.

By Andrew Lisa (adapted).* [Read original article](#)

If you're considering moving in with one of your grown children, it's wise to think it through in detail, plan ahead, and take steps to avoid any conflicts that might undermine what should be a great thing: multigenerational family living. This article looks at the situation from both the senior and the adult child perspectives. Below is a list of important items to consider *together*.

FIRST, TALK OPENLY AND HONESTLY

Nicole Hanna is the executive director of [Vineyard Henderson](#), an assisted-living community opening in this fall in Henderson, Nevada. A 20-year veteran of the eldercare industry, Hanna believes that success is not possible without a frank conversation up front. *"It is so important to sit down before taking any action or making any decisions to discuss frustrations, concerns, reluctance, and any other emotions all parties involved may be feeling,"* she said.

ESTABLISH DEFINED BOUNDARIES

Even if the basic relationship is good, living together can potentially be stressful if the parties don't recognize and respect the personal and physical space of the other. *"Boundaries, like fences, are often crossed or neglected,"* Hanna said. *"Especially in the often hurried and sometimes never-ending hours of caregiving. Most caregivers are more effective and open hearted when they know where their boundaries are, and they protect them. It is important for both the one receiving the care and the one giving to understand those limitations."*

UNEXPECTED ISSUES SHOULD BE EXPECTED

No matter how thorough your planning, issues are certain to arise that you couldn't have possibly predicted. Keep unwelcome surprises to a minimum by brainstorming potential scenarios that could upset the cart. *"There will be questions and situations that come up that you likely won't be prepared for,"* Hanna said. *"To the best of your ability, try to identify a list of 'what ifs' and consider or determine the actions associated with those."*

EVALUATE THE PARENT'S NEEDS

Jason Biddle is the owner of The Helping Home, a former website that provided resources to help older adults age in place. He reminds anyone who will be welcoming an older parent into their home how important it is to evaluate the unique needs that seniors so often have. *"Evaluating needs means taking into account food requirements, physical accommodations, health, and other issues,"* Biddle said.

ALSO CONSIDER OTHER NEEDS

The spiritual, mental, social, and occupational needs of the older parent must be considered, too. *“Mental needs can include anything from managing stress to making time for reading to playing family games,”* Biddle said. He added that social needs include *“visiting with friends, meeting new people, using social media and volunteering. Senior parents may also have spiritual needs like times of meditation, attending religious events, and reading sacred texts. Occupational needs exist even during retirement and may include things like gardening, painting, caring for pets, and learning new skills.”*

GET GRANULAR WITH DETAILS

Carolyn Miller Parr is an elder mediator and the co-author of [Love’s Way: Living Peacefully with your Family as your Parents Age](#). She reminds anyone entering into this family dynamic to keep in mind that little details about the older person’s health and personal information won’t seem so little when those details are needed in an emergency. She specifies that children need names and addresses of all care providers, as well as information about parents’ insurance. They also need the parent’s advance directive with health care power of attorney, so they can act for the parent should it be needed.

IT CAN BE HELPFUL FOR THE CHILD TO EASE THE PARENT OUT OF THEIR PREVIOUS HOME

Both parties are in for a big change and the situation will take some getting used to for everyone involved — but the parents are the ones who must leave their old lives and living spaces behind. A lot of that anxiety can be reduced if the child guides and helps the parent throughout the process. *“Another way to smooth the transition is to help the parent with downsizing, which may feel overwhelming,”* Parr said. *“You may want to leave the parent’s room unfurnished so they can have some of their own things around them.”*

BE REAL ABOUT THE DAY-TO-DAY GRIND

If you’re moving in with an adult child, or if you’re an adult child welcoming an older parent, chances are good you’ve weighed the major considerations, but have you really thought through the little details that truly make household dynamics healthy or stressful? Parr suggests considering things like food preferences, TV-sharing, mealtimes, and bedtimes. *“Does a parent relate well to a family pet?”* she asked. *“Does the parent want to bring their own pet? Who will care for it? What are the generations’ respective needs for privacy? Elders may need to adjust hours so as not to be in the mix when grandchildren and their parents are getting ready for work and school. Everyone needs to be flexible with the new arrangement.”*

DISCUSS MONEY MATTERS

A conversation that is likely to be uncomfortable is also one that is almost certainly inevitable: money. Misplaced financial expectations, feelings of resentment over lopsided costs or the simple realities of financial necessity can sink parent-child cohabitation. Uncomfortable as it may be, this conversation is simply one that must be had. *“If a contribution of money or chores is expected, that should be talked through,”* Parr said.

FIND A BALANCE FOR DIFFERING TEMPERATURE NEEDS

Parr asks people on both sides of this dynamic to consider beforehand one seemingly trivial thing that’s easy to overlook but that will affect literally every minute of every day: climate. The reality is, different people keep their houses at different temperatures, and the difference of a few degrees can mean the world. *“Older people typically like warmer temperature in the house,”* Parr said. *“When my own parents moved in with my husband and me, my mother complained constantly about being cold.”* Parr and her husband installed an A.C. unit in their room and put a heater in her mother’s room to avoid turning on the central air. *“It was a way to meet differing needs,”* she said. *“Parents may be grieving the loss of home or old community. Be kind.”*

SEEK THE LINE BETWEEN TOO MUCH HELP AND NOT ENOUGH

Alixandra Foisy is a professional in the aging field who set up a business to extend her services to seniors with limited abilities and [income](#). She points out that older individuals may feel like they're losing their independence by moving in with their children. This may lead them to resent the offer of any help they don't absolutely need. On the other side, are the adult child's expectations about the level of help the parent should give or not give. *"Some family members want to be helpful, but their parents don't want or need assistance," she said. "At the same time, adult children may be expecting help with their children or around the house and the older person may not want to or be able to do so. Reviewing expectations and boundaries is really important and can set the family up for more success."*

PROMOTE RESPECT AND DISCOURAGE HARMFUL PATTERNS

Foisy cautions both parties to prevent friction by maintaining boundaries and being aware of behavior that could be perceived as dismissive or disrespectful. All of this is necessary to avoid what she calls *"the danger of falling into difficult relationship patterns."* As she puts it: *"Adult children may feel that their parents overstep boundaries by dismissing their parenting style,"* Foisy said. *"Older adults may feel they are not being respected when their adult children try to treat them like children themselves."*

DON'T LET SKELETONS COME TUMBLING OUT OF THE CLOSET

The parent-child dynamic is one of the most complex relationships a person will ever have, and childhood issues or hard feelings can surface in the new living arrangement. When the roles switch and the parent is under the child's roof, old skeletons have a way of resurfacing. *"Families may find that they are falling into destructive or harmful relationship patterns that have been unresolved,"* Foisy said. *"Guilt may also play a role from the beginning as adult children often feel that they have to help out and invite their parent to live with them when they really do not want to do this."*

CONSIDER A WRITTEN CONTRACT

When it comes to expectations, most experts agree that communication is paramount, but Foisy takes that notion a step further to one normally confined to the legal world. *"When considering moving in with an adult child, it can be helpful to write out a contract regarding your expectations and boundaries,"* she said. *"These issues can be worked out through a series of conversations and can act as a way to avoid conflict and enjoy your time together."*

MAKE ROOM

Kelsey Roadruck, the editor at household improvement magazine House Method, recently covered [multigenerational living](#) in her publication. Along the way, she learned just how important the physical space itself can be in making parent/adult child cohabitation successful. *"Step 1 is to make more room to accommodate all members of the household,"* Roadruck said. *"You might knock down a wall to expand the kitchen, convert a half bathroom on the main floor into a full bathroom, or turn a garage or bonus room into additional living space."*

BUILD FOR ACCESSIBILITY

If the parent who will be joining the child's household has a condition that is physically limiting, that should be accommodated for prior to renovations that are designed to increase privacy. *"Accessibility is an issue that should be addressed before seniors move in,"* Roadruck said. *"Universal design principles are helpful in adjusting a home for seniors or adults who plan to age in place. Some ideas include installing grab bars in the bathroom, replacing conventional doorknobs with lever-style handles, and enhancing visibility with more light fixtures."*

BUILD FOR PRIVACY

If you do have the motivation and the means to [prep your home with a renovation](#), design not for form, but for function — especially when it comes to giving everyone their own intimate space. *“Privacy will need to be prioritized in a home with multiple adults living together,”* Roadruck said. *“You can partition space in an open floor plan with room dividers, half walls, and pocket or French doors.”*

From the RiperYears staff: Holding prayerful, respectful, and detailed conversations about all these issues will lead your family to solutions for the current need. *“As he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;”* (1 Peter 1:15)

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