



January 2011

Making Life Changing Decisions

Getting married, selling a home, bringing a child into your life, changing doctors, changing religions, divorcing, widowhood, career changes, education are just a few decisions that could change your life. New Years Day makes us think of resolutions, but most people soon fall back into old habits and the good intentions fall to the wayside.

Life changes can be "big" so we need to move slowly after something happens to us: like the death of a loved one, a natural disaster, divorce or other changes not directed by intent or desire. For these less positive life journeys we need a lot more help from friends, family and professionals. Because of the loss encountered, we enter into a grief period that could trap us or free us to expand our lives.

Decisions that will affect our lives also may be better made with a little feedback from professional counselors, clergy or close friends. We want to find someone who will be honest and help us see the positives and the negatives. We need a mirror that is objective. This is a reason why family members generally can't play this role.

As we reach the retirement years we think about "downsizing", traveling, spending/saving money, end of life issues, and health maintenance. Relationships seem to take on a greater focus – so living closer to those you love might be the decision you are contemplating. Are you willing to give up your community, home and providers, like physicians or your valued hair stylist?

A good decision starts with an idea and then is followed by some research into the options available to you. Then by narrowing your choices and conducting more research, you are ready to discuss



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your plan with an objective person who will help you with this decision. Any change that will affect the quality of your life will be full of transitions –adding as well as a subtracting, hopefully enhancing the remainder of your life.

Even when we have done our "homework", talked over our decisions with a professional and started to take action on the change we desire, we need to prepare ourselves for the new beginning. We need to know that we might be in denial for a while, that we might feel angry or depressed before we become comfortable with our new decision. What works for us in "life satisfaction" at one time in our life doesn't always work at other times.

As a professional Geriatric Care Manager, I think the most common decision that most elders face is, "Do I stay in my home or should I move to a retirement community (possibly near my children)?" Moves can be traumatic, but the fear of packing or going through years of accumulation should not stop you – there are services that will help you with that. The more important question is: "When I move, whom will I have in my life and/or what activities can I add to my life to bring meaning and value to this next chapter?" Many that I have coached with this decision have taken several years to come to a definitive answer to what is best for them.

Spiritual decisions or coming to terms with your life are also common to late life journeys. There are "Spiritual Directors" to help you on this path should that be a dilemma for you.

Medical or end of life decisions truly need to be discussed before there is a need and you should have completed an Advance Directive for Health Care, The Five Wishes and/or the POLST (Physicians Orders for Live Sustaining Treatments). Having prepared these tools earlier in our lives frees others from having to make hard decisions without our input.

Our attitude and personality will affect our ability to make changes. Those of us who are risk takers will quickly come to a decision and, if it doesn't work, try something different. However, many of us are indecisive and can be stuck and fearful of change. My wish for each of us is to find the path that leads to life satisfaction and peace. To start, try adding an element of volunteerism to your life or taking up a new interest that stimulates your mind and your heart. This can actually change your life in ways you never imagined.

The journey is short, make yours matter! Happy New Year!

Eldercare Services provides Counseling, Support Groups, Home Care and Care Management to aid Family Caregivers. If you or someone you know could benefit from self-care, give us a call at (866) 760-1808.



ATTENTION!! Eldercare Answers is now green.
To ensure you or someone you know receives our newsletter, please send a valid email address to DanielleG@EldercareAnswers.com.



Eldercare Services has offices in Oakland, San Francisco and Walnut Creek, CA.
Visit us on the web at <http://www.EldercareAnswers.com> for more information.

Community Classes

Walnut Creek

Families Dealing with Dementia
3rd Friday of every month from 10 AM to Noon
1808 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94595

Class Registration: Please call at least 3 days ahead

For more information regarding classes and support groups, visit us at www.EldercareAnswers.com or call (925) 937-2018, (415) 469-8300 or email us at info@EldercareAnswers.com

Support Groups

When concerns for aging family members are part of every day life, or when they interfere with work, your health or other relationships, you need to join a support group.

Caring for An Aging Family Member

2nd Thursday of every month from 7 to 8:30 PM
1808 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94595

1st Tuesday of every month from 6 to 7:30 PM
605 A Chenery St., San Francisco, CA 94131

Cost for Support Groups: None

Support Group Registration: Not required