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“When to stop driving ... ”

By Linda Prather, Home Helpers

When we age, we can say the time will come when we will need to stop driving. This may be due to a medical condition, declining cognitive skills, slower reflexes, or poor hearing. Epilepsy is an obvious reason to stop as a seizure could occur when least expected. Neuropathy could hinder your ability to pivot your driving foot quickly enough. Poor eyesight could cause inability to judge distances. Cognitive deficiencies could cause an inability to predict upcoming traffic situations, or cause you to lose your way. And if you can't hear someone yelling “Stop!” or a car honking at you – who knows what will happen?

Linda Prather, from Home Helpers, states “I dread the moment of truth when I have to stop driving. I, more so, dread the moment I have to tell one of my loved ones that they should stop driving. My dad is probably reading this and I want him to know that I am very thankful that he made the decision on his own to stop driving. It eliminated the need for that dreaded discussion.” Home Helpers often deals with many clients who have loved ones that are struggling with how to tell them they need to stop driving. “I have seen family members hide keys from their loved ones, replace good keys with ones that don't work, or have a mechanic “un-fix” the car so it won't start anymore. It is sad that people have to go to this measure to ensure their loved one's safety. I feel very lucky and blessed that my dad allowed my family to take the easy route.”

Agencies, like Home Helpers, can and do provide transportation for clients that cannot or choose not to drive anymore. So it's not that the service is not available, the problem is that most people have a hard time admitting they should not drive anymore. Giving up the freedom that comes with the ability to drive is hard to accept.

Home Helpers often works with families in helping them come to a decision about driving. One of the first things to overcome is to understand that driving is not a right, it is a privilege. And the privilege should be taken away if the driver has a high probability of harming themselves, passengers, pedestrians, or others. But driving is a sign of our independence that most of us have had since our teenage years – and it enables us to go anywhere and do anything on demand. It becomes very routine for us and we simply take it for granted. Taking away this privilege is an incredibly difficult decision.

Now that the holidays are past us, and the winter snow and ice is about to converge on the city, if you are one of the people that have loved ones telling you that it's time to stop driving, now is a great time to really sit back and think about what is best for you and your community. Here are 10 things to consider:

- 1) Know that your loved ones who are begging you to stop driving, love you and care about you and want you to be both independent and safe. A car accident will undoubtedly cause you to become dependent on someone driving you, but may also cause you to become dependent on someone bathing, feeding, and dressing you. Which is the worse of two evils?

- 2) A car accident may also harm someone else and you may end up in a legal battle. Now do you really need all that hassle in your life?
- 3) Have your loved one ride in a car with you to judge your skills from their perspective. If they are afraid to ride in a car that you are driving, you have your answer already. If your family members are not close by, ask a trusted advisor like a doctor, lawyer, insurance agent, etc. to evaluate your abilities.
- 4) Stop wasting your energy on negative based arguments. Rather, be positive and spend quality time together researching alternatives to driving that will work for you.
- 5) Our city does not have the variety of transportation options that many other cities have. We do have the senior van service, bus routes, and agencies like Home Helpers. Transportation for seniors is a great unmet area that needs to be addressed. With the population statistics as they are, we have no choice. Use your positive influence and energy in working with your community to help address this issue.
- 6) Our society is changing and the list of companies now offering delivery of products or services is growing. Research pharmacies, grocery stores, meal preparation services, doctors, dentists, hairdressers, etc. in your area that can bring the goods or services to you.
- 7) Know that when you make this decision there will be a “grieving” time for what you feel is a loss of independence. Stay positive by working on a plan to overcome this perceived loss. Think of all the places you will want to go and make a plan on how you will get there. Start your list with the routine places (doctor, groceries, running errands, etc) and then add the fun places you would like to go to (movies, card club, out to dinner, shopping, etc.) The earlier you plan, the more options you will have.
- 8) Let your friends know that you are about to make this decision. You will be surprised how many new options come out of the woodwork!
- 9) It’s really too cold to go out driving now anyway – dealing with scraping your windshield, worrying about the icy road conditions, etc. Let someone else worry about that for you!
- 10) If your loved one hasn’t brought up this topic before, now is a good time to ask them what they think! It’s better to plan ahead than to deal with this when emotions are heightened.

Home Helpers provides non-medical in home senior and personal care services similar to what is often provided by family members. Our services are designed to help people of all ages (not just the elderly) maintain their independence and avoid isolation. We provide up to 24 hour care to clients in their residential home or in a facility. To learn more about our services or to ask for our free newsletter, call our office at 513-754-1182 or 859-801-1510, or view our website at <http://www.homehelpers.cc>