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CRESCENTA VALLEY
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Spiritually Speaking

***QUESTION:** I'm 83 years old, have been a widow for 12 years and am in excellent health. I still drive and attend church regularly. My four children all live out of the area, and although we all get along great, all I hear from them is how worried they are about me because I live alone in my own home. Nothing has happened to cause them this great concern. They tell me they would feel better about my safety if I would go into a retirement home. Needless to say, I don't want to do that. If and when I feel I can't take care of myself, I'll willingly make that move and I've made that very clear to them. In the meantime, what can I tell them because they are constantly pressuring me to make the move.*

Crescenta Valley Great-Grandmother

Answer:

Dear Great Grandmother,

First of all, let me congratulate you on reaching 83 years of age and being in excellent health. It is wonderful that you can still drive, are able to attend church regularly and have given your children no need to be worried. Those are all wonderful gifts that you have received.

That being said, I understand your children's concerns, particularly with their living out of the area. I remember my own anxiety about my parents when they were about your age, even though they had already chosen to move to a retirement community where they had many friends.

The unfortunate thing is that most retirement communities have waiting lists, some as long as a year or more. So when you decide you need help, the best fit for you may not be available. I would suggest that you at least check some of the local options to find out what they offer and what their usual availability is – just so you know.

If you are still convinced that staying in your own home is the best option for you (and I certainly understand that), you might ease the concerns of your children by having someone – perhaps someone from your church – check in on you regularly to assure them that you are OK. Or they might be willing to engage someone to provide you with regular home support.

Whatever you work out, please try to understand that your children care about you and don't want you to experience any unnecessary risks. The love of our families is a blessing, and it sounds as though you have been richly blessed.



Rev. Dr. Betty Stapleford
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Dear Independent Great-Grandmother,

It is wonderful that your family is expressing their concern about your welfare. Consider having a serious discussion with your family about their worries. Worry is unexpressed fear, and fear is not healthy in any relationship. The acronym for F.E.A.R. is "False Evidence Appearing Real." Communication is one of the keys to easing your family's fears. Share with your family how you have prepared for the rest of your life. Create a notebook with your important information, doctors' numbers, neighbors' and who to contact should you need assistance.

Go through the "What If List" with them. What are the circumstances and plans your family should follow if you need assistance? Maybe a "Life Alert" or similar type system in your home would put them at ease knowing you can get help at a moments notice.

Do you have a final service plan? Show them your ideas. Give your family reasons why you feel your independence is so important to you, especially in your golden years! You obviously have ideas on how to be independent and if you can allow your loved ones to have more information about your plans, maybe everyone will feel a little more relaxed about your independence.



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