

Coping with Three Generations Under One Roof

Most older people prefer to live in their own homes or apartments. They fear being a burden to their children. There are, however, times when an elderly parent and his or her adult child share living quarters, by choice or necessity. This will affect you, as well as your family. Here are some suggestions for making a cooperative living arrangement work well.

Spouse:

- Involve your spouse in planning.
- Respect your spouse's need for privacy and for time alone with you. Keep in touch with each other.
- Discuss your expectations of your spouse's involvement as a caregiver. Solve problems together.
- Make a space where your spouse can pursue independent interests without distractions or interruptions.
- Keep records and receipts of special expenditures made for the arrangement.
- Discuss planned costs.
- Maintain social contact and outside activities as a couple.
- Be cheerful and stay interested in your spouse's activities.

Kids:

- Involve your children in planning for any changes.
- Create a list of "courtesies" for them to observe; explain why these are important.

- Set an example. Loud music or other youthful pursuits should be moderate for the comfort of others.
- Encourage them to join in family tasks that involve the elder. Foster inter-generational sharing.
- Allow for slip-ups; discuss special circumstances and limits. Remind children that you once lived in your parent's home.
- Respect privacy.
- Allow for time-out.

Senior:

- Respect the privacy of family members. Don't interfere.
- Be considerate when you use the telephone.
- Don't criticize housekeeping, cooking, spouse, friends, children, clothes, TV programs or church.
- Discuss problems calmly.
- Be friendly to children. Take the first step to resolve conflicts.
- Offer to help, but don't force your way of doing something.
- Keep a sense of humor. Don't inflict guilt.
- Help with expenses. Pay as much of your way as you can.
- Set goals for yourself. Associate with friends.
- Maintain appearance and hygiene.

Source: Adapted from Caregiver Connection, Purdue University Cooperative Extension (Cyr, Louise Franck).

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