

## Major Changes

Mrs. Herald walked closely behind her daughter. She did not seem to be aware of her surroundings. Her daughter reached out her hand and shook mine, "I'd like you to meet my mom, Katherine Herald." I then reached toward Mrs. Herald. She slowly lifted up her arm letting her hand land in mine. I gently squeezed. There was no response from her frail fingers.

"How do you do, Mrs. Herald?" Her eyes met mine and her lips barely tipped up into a smile.

"Fine," she stated flatly.

"I'm so glad to meet you," I stated happily hoping that I could help relieve her anxiety in some small way.

I later learned that Mrs. Herald had moved from her home of forty years into her daughter and son-in-law's home. She had been experiencing forgetfulness that made it difficult for her to maintain her home. She was also forgetting to pay bills and take her pills. Her daughter had been trying to convince her to move into her home for several years. Mrs. Herald had been living alone and

managing very well for the last twenty years. However, the last three years and especially the last six months had been very difficult for her.

## Transition

Studies have shown that frail elderly individuals have difficulty with major changes in their living situations. There is a transition period which makes them susceptible to illnesses, bouts of confusion, and depression. Caregivers need to be aware that their loved one will generally need more oversight until he or she has adjusted to a new living situation.

Mrs. Herald's daughter shared that her mom wasn't eating well, had fallen twice, and didn't seem like herself since the move. Mrs. Herald was usually talkative and inquisitive about family and friends. Her daughter stated that she had to remind Mrs. Herald of everything sometimes several times.



## What to do?

Many families are not aware of seniors' needs. For example, their parents have been independent and functioning well. But for many adult children, the reality of caring for a parent with failing health is what they are faced with due to their parent's frailty and/or dementia. The following suggestions will ease the transition period for elderly parents who are faced with a major move:

- Find a family practitioner as soon as possible
- Recognize signs and symptoms of depression such as poor appetite, changes in personality, and loss of interest in life
- Minimize the amount of time the person is alone
- Foster new relationships with individuals of like interests
- Participate in a support group for caregivers

*I have been young, and now I am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed. Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore. Ps 37: 25-27*