

**T**elling Mom she was moving to a nursing home is the hardest thing I have ever done

These words from a veteran green beret officer were accompanied by a glistening of tears as he recalled the day, 11 years ago, he prepared his 86 year old, invalid mother for the last move of her life.

Making the choice to move a love one to a nursing home produces a host of emotions for everyone involved. Your loved one may feel he or she is being abandoned, unloved, rejected. You may be faced with angry accusations and emotional pleas. You may feel guilt, sadness, anxiety and frustration. And you will have well-meaning individuals and professionals tell you “Don’t feel guilty” as though you can just make life altering decisions for your loved ones and then walk away whistling.

The word GUILT stands for an emotion that results from having done something *wrong* and is part of the way God helps us correct our actions. And we misuse the word when we relate it to Caregiving. If we took Mom to the side of the forest and left her there to fend for herself – then we could and should use the word properly (although with that extreme I think we might be past any feelings at all). But when the nursing home choice has to be made, you as Caregiver have weighed the alternatives, studied the impact on everyone involved and concluded that the solution that serves the best interests of the majority of people involved is the solution that must be accepted. Remember – there are no right choices – every decision you make is wrong for somebody. You have to make the choice to limit the broader impact. Rather than guilt – **caregivers deal with feelings of regret, anger, failure, disappointment and grieving.**

Dealing with these emotions will require patience with yourself, understanding of the feelings your loved one will have and a clear understanding of all the procedures and programs that will now be a part of your lives.



One of the harder tasks in *making the choice* is telling your loved one what is going to be happening. In some circumstances, especially those where dementia is a major factor, “therapeutic fibbing” may be the easiest.

“Mom, the house has to be treated for termites” or “Dad, we are having trouble with the plumbing in the walls and they have to be torn open” .... But, if your loved one is cognizant you will have to be more direct and reassuring as possible. There will be no way to really allay the fear and anxiety and expecting visits to homes to resolve those feelings is not likely to help.

The nursing home choice is rarely easily made. And it is not deciding to give up caring for your loved one, in fact sometimes the actual time involved becomes greater. It is recognizing your own limitations and understanding that sometimes the best care is not always your care.

**Resources:**

[Living Well in a nursing home: everything you and your folks need to know](#) Lynn Dickinson and Xenia Vosen with Severine Biederman

[The Complete Legal Guide to Senior Care](#) Brette McWhorter Sember

[Making the Nursing Home Choice](#) MetLife Mature Market Institute

[Long Distance Caregiving: A survival guide for far away caregivers](#) Angela Heath

[Nursing Homes: Getting good care there](#) Sarah Greene Burger

[How to Care For Aging Parents](#) Virginia Morris and Robert Butler

[A Bed By the Window](#) – M Scott Peck M.D.

[Your Best is Good Enough: Aging Parents and Your Emotions](#) Vivian Greenberg