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Clarifying roles before a crisis arises



What if your life suddenly changed. Do you know who would step up to help? Regardless of whether you are a solo ager, part of a couple who hasn't discussed "what if" scenarios, or someone with family nearby, it's best to identify help before needs arise. Making the effort now to talk about your wishes and expectations helps create clarity, both for you and for the people who care about you.

To get warmed up for such a discussion, consider these scenarios. What if you

- fall and break a wrist. Who could help you with dressing, cooking, transportation?
- have to evacuate or lose your home due to disaster. Where would you be welcome for an immediate or long-term stay?
- are suddenly stricken ill and hospitalized. Who could access your house to care for your pet, or collect your calendar to cancel appointments and such?

Identify your people. Who do you picture being present as you age? If there are family members you can look to, great. If you are a solo ager, you might create a chosen circle of helpers, perhaps a combination of friends and professionals. Whatever your situation, make sure they understand what is being asked of them and are willing to serve in the role.

Start talking. Perhaps you feel that a certain beloved person would be willing to help you if needed, but you have never actually asked them. Or you hesitate to talk about your future with others because you don't know how to begin. The conversation doesn't have to be perfect, it just has to start. Explain that you are being proactive and don't want to make assumptions. Don't rush things—you might need multiple conversations.

Build a team. Let your chosen people know who else is part of the team and what you've planned with them. Without a plan, responsibilities often fall to whomever happens to be nearby. Share with them what matters most to you in life so they understand your wishes in their full context. Talk through who would communicate with providers, or share updates should you become incapacitated. It's also wise to consider what would happen if a member of your team were suddenly unable to fulfill their duties. Is there a backup?

Put your wishes in writing. Written plans and clear documentation remove guesswork. Share key documents with your team, such as your advance directive and will, trust, or estate plan. Consider what other information someone might need in an emergency, such as contact information for your insurance, doctors, and other service providers.

Revisit plans as life changes. Life evolves. Regularly review your plans with your support network and update them after major life changes, either for you or them.

Need help putting together a team? Call us at 206-456-5155.



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Aging Wisdom supports individuals and families in King and south Snohomish Counties as they plan for aging.



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