

LET'S TALK ABOUT TRANSITIONS

Holmes and Rahe were not a 1970's rock duo!

Although their name sounds like a number of rockers from the 1970's, psychiatrists Thomas Holmes and Richard Rahe created the Social Readjustment Rating Scale (SRRS) in 1967. Disappointed? Don't be. Their contributions were greater than Hall and Oates, Captain and Tennille and Seals and Crofts combined. The SRRS measures the relative effects of life events on our general stress level.

The death of a spouse ranks at 100, followed by divorce (73), marital separation (65), imprisonment (63) and the death of a close family member (63). On the lower end of the stress scale are minor legal violation (11), major holiday (12) and, believe it or not, a vacation (13).

What does all this have to do with our residents and their families? Several of the more stressful events of life relate

to transition, and transition is an everyday event in a retirement community.

Here are ratings for some of the transitions or changes that we may see our residents experience:

- Serious illness requiring hospitalization (58)
- Death of a friend or neighbor (37)
- Change in living conditions, such as the need for additional care (25)
- Change in residence, such as joining our retirement communities (20)
- Change in social activities, such as meeting new friends (18)
- Change in sleeping habits (16)

All of these factors contribute to the stress level of both our residents and their families. In many cases, we serve residents who are dealing with more than one of these factors at the same time. We also need to recognize the stress placed on family members as they watch and participate in the transitions of their parents and grandparents.



Joe Anderson
President, Seniority, Inc.

Both negative and positive events can be stressful, and if we recognize the full range of those experiences, we can help others deal with them. Even the least of these (change of sleeping habits) can be traumatic for the resident who is grappling with getting sufficient rest.

We need to keep a sharp eye out for multiple transitions that residents may be experiencing, and provide support and stress relief as we can. Anything less and we're not performing our jobs – and in the words of the great 70's philosophers Hall and Oates: "I Can't Go For That! [No Can Do]"

Joe Anderson

SEPTEMBER 2015

TEAMWORK AND ATTENTION MAKE SMOOTH TRANSITIONS

Norine Nishimura and her two brothers' original plan to help their aging parents was to remodel their home and hire a caregiver. Then they heard about Nikkei Senior Gardens.



The Nishimura family

The Arleta, California, assisted living community seemed like a great option. Their mother, June, used a wheelchair and required more care than their father, Joe, could provide. However, at first, the couple resisted the change.

"My father was basically my mother's caregiver, and we knew it was difficult for him to assist her and continue to work," says Norine. "But Nikkei, which had just opened, was perfect. It was exactly what we needed."

When Joe and June moved into Nikkei in 2009, team members went to work to smooth the couple's transition. Team members connected two adjacent apartments so Joe and June could maintain separate bedrooms but share a kitchen and living room. The transition was still challenging for the couple, who had to adjust to new neighbors and ways of living, but the team was there for them.

"The team was very accommodating," Norine says. "But it took a lot of getting used to. Mom and dad suddenly

didn't have as much control over their meals and schedules as they once did."

Supportive team members played active roles in the transition. "Everyone helped our parents integrate into the community. They made the process so much easier," she says.

The challenges of transition are common as residents move into senior housing communities at older ages and with increased medical needs.



TEAMWORK AND ATTENTION MAKE SMOOTH TRANSITIONS (CONTINUED)

The average age for residents in senior living has steadily climbed from 82 in 1999 to the upper 80s today, according to Senior Housing News. And about half of everyone age 65 and older needs some assistance with daily living activities, according to Forbes.

While adult children and grandchildren provide the most care, older adults are increasingly entering assisted living and long-term care, according to the blog A Place for Mom.

“The proportion of the frail older population, those 85 and older, without any surviving children will increase from about 16 percent in 2000 to about 21 percent in 2040,” Lynn Feinberg of the AARP told Forbes.

As a result, transitions are challenging for both residents and families, according to Portia Obina, Nikkei’s memory support supervisor.

“It’s not a quick decision to sell a family home and move into senior housing,” she says. “And it can be even more challenging when someone

needs additional daily living assistance or memory care.”

To help ease the transition, Obina and others encourage residents to customize their apartments, participate in community activities and call families frequently.

“We’re always paying attention,” says Obina, who adds that caregivers are often the first to notice struggles related to transition, such as decreased appetite or lack of interest in social activities.

This person-centered care made all the difference for her parents, Norine Nishimura says. For example, team members made recommendations for doctors and pharmacists when June and Joe joined the community. They encouraged June to attend Japanese classes after they discovered she had a passion for the language. And they facilitated dinner conversations between Joe and other widowers after June died in 2010, helping him gain support.

Joe died this January. Now, Norine and her brothers are helping their aunt, who has memory loss, transition into Nikkei.

Norine’s advice for other families experiencing transition: Remember that your goal is to provide as much support and comfort for your loved one as possible.

There’s no doubt that change is an intense journey, but it’s a blessing, too.

“It’s a rich, fulfilling experience to help someone move into senior living or transition to a higher level of care,” Norine says. “My father told me he wouldn’t change a thing about his life. He had a beautiful transition and life here.”



CUSTOMIZATION MATTERS

Personalization makes the transition into senior living easier for residents, according to a 2015 study from Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan.

The study found that seniors felt nervous about selling their houses and downsizing their possessions. A



lack of personal space in senior living communities only deepens their anxiety. As a result, the ability to customize their apartment is essential.

“In this project, most residents moving to independent living communities made plans to personalize their new residences in varying ways,” says Te Perry, director of the study. “As older adults create

homes in new spaces, the selection of personalized options may impact well-being and functioning.”

Seniority Extends Partnership in Oklahoma

Seniority and the Carland Group have created a joint venture.

In this new partnership, Seniority and the Carland Group will each own half of Belfair of Shawnee, an assisted living community in Shawnee, Oklahoma.

“Our companies share core values, business philosophy, compassion and a desire to help seniors in housing and health services,” says Nicolo Amari, Seniority’s vice president of management services. “This partnership strengthens the Carland Group’s stature in senior housing while strengthening and securing Seniority’s position as a leading Oklahoma operator.”



For more information about Belfair of Shawnee, visit www.belfairofshawnee.com.