That statement probably causes more stress than almost any other when it comes to making long-term caregiving decisions with seniors. Many seniors have seen or heard about substandard nursing homes from the past. Even though most assisted living and nursing facilities are much improved today, many seniors hold on to their earlier impressions. And even when seniors accept that such care is better today, nearly everyone prefers to stay in their own home and neighborhood as long as possible.

About one in four seniors today will spend some time in a nursing home. More than half will need significant help with their activities of daily living, often involving short- or long-term stays in assisted living facilities. Ideally, caregivers will have regular discussions with seniors about options if or when care outside the home is necessary. Unfortunately, in too many cases, emergencies such as a fall or stroke require immediate decisions.

What if your senior is adamant about staying at home, regardless of the circumstances? Here are some strategies that may be persuasive:

- Try to convince the senior that a move would be best for their own health and
well-being. If that fails, explain how it would be best for your own health and well-being.

- Enlist the support of other family members. Unfortunately, sometimes other family members also resist the idea of moving.
- Ask your senior’s doctors and pastors to help explain why a move is best.
- If your senior does not need to make an immediate decision, back off your pressure. Sometimes events such as a neighborhood burglary, a financial scam, or the loss of a friend may help your senior reconsider moving.
- Most care facilities welcome visits from potential residents, sometimes offering a complimentary meal. That kind of visit with no commitments may be less threatening.

The caregiving decision can be even tougher when the senior is limited by dementia. In such cases, some caregivers use “compassionate deception.” An example is that you convince your senior to go to the facility for a limited period, say a week. Then you stretch the time to two weeks and more, hoping your senior will adjust to staying there fulltime.

Sometimes none of the above suggestions work. If at all possible, find agreement among your siblings for one of you to have power of attorney for your senior. If your senior becomes a danger to himself or others, the person with power of attorney can secure help from law enforcement to take the senior to a hospital, where they will usually be released to a nursing home. This option is only a last resort.

Many caregivers experience significant guilt if they feel they have forced a senior into nursing care, or not kept a promise. Find a trusted confidant with whom you can talk through these feelings – one who can help you realize that the decision was the best for your senior long-term.

Resources
Reducing Asthma and Allergy Triggers in Your Home

Most people spend 90 percent of their time indoors where they are exposed to several allergy and asthma triggers, including dust mites, mold spores, pet dander, tobacco smoke, and cockroaches. Each year millions of adults and children are affected by the air inside their homes. There are
some changes you can make to reduce your exposure to common indoor environmental asthma and allergy triggers.

Start by reducing the clutter in your home. Dust and bugs collect on stacks of papers, magazines, clothes and boxes. Sort through your stacks of stuff and eliminate at least 50 percent of each pile. More would be even better!

Now that you have removed some of the clutter, start cleaning your home more often and use fewer household chemicals. When you select cleaning products, look for those that emit low levels of volatile organic compounds (VOCs). Or better yet, save money by making your own cleaning products using the UGA Extension green cleaning recipes. To help reduce dust mites, you should vacuum your home regularly and dust with a damp cloth or a microfiber cloth. Wash the bedding every week. If someone in your home suffers from severe allergies, consider replacing carpet with wood, vinyl, linoleum or tile flooring.

Reducing the relative humidity level inside your home will help minimize molds, mildews, bacteria and insects. The recommended relative humidity level for inside your home is 30 to 50 percent in the winter and less than 60 percent in the summer. Improving air flow also helps reduce mold problems. For example, if you are experiencing mold growth in the closet, then improve the air flow inside the closet by removing about half of the contents of the closet and leaving the door open. Turn on exhaust fans when showering and cooking.

Droppings or body parts of cockroaches and other pests can be asthma triggers. To prevent pests, keep counters, sinks, tables, and floors clean and free of open containers of food and water, as well as clutter.

The dander from your favorite pet could also trigger an allergic reaction or asthma attack. If your pet lives indoors, then keep it out of the bedrooms and off of furniture. It will help if you vacuum carpets and furniture regularly.

Finally, don’t allow anyone to smoke inside your home, and don’t open the windows during the spring pollen season. Making these changes can help improve the air quality inside your home and reduce coughing and wheezing. For more information on asthma, visit the EPA website.
3. **Eat some fat (the good kind).**

   The days of “fat-free” and “low-fat” everything are as gone as ‘80s hair. Healthy fats, like those found in fish, avocados, nuts and healthy oils like olive and canola oil (not coconut) are good for our hearts and brains, but they also help our meals have staying power. Fats helps us feel full, so don’t try and cut too many calories by leaving out the fats or you may find yourself overeating later.

4. **Move more.**

   Yes, we all need to find a great exercise routine, but just getting more physical activity throughout the day will help your body ward off disease and will likely help your mood. Get up from your chair and take a lap around your house. When you run errands at the big box store, take a lap around the perimeter of the store before you pick up your cart to shop. Get out of your chair and sit back down 10 times in a row. Work those muscles that will keep you moving and independent.

5. **Self-monitor.**

   If weight management or being more active is your goal, then you need to know where you are now. Most of us wouldn’t dream of not monitoring our bank accounts, so why not our food intake or the number of steps we take?
each day? People who self-monitor their food intake and physical activity eat better, move more and have healthier waistlines. So if reaching your goal weight is on your mind, now’s the time to take stock.

If you need help setting a goal, see the Dietary Guidelines for Americans at http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/.

For great tips on exercise for older adults, see the National Institute on Aging’s Go4Life website at https://go4life.nia.nih.gov/

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**Avocado Breakfast Bruschetta**

*Makes 4 servings*

**Ingredients**

1. **ripe avocado**
2. **2 medium tomatoes**
3. **1 green onion**
4. **½ cup chopped fresh basil (plus 2 tbsp. for garnish)**
5. **4 eggs** (hard-boiled)
6. **12 slices whole-wheat baguette bread**
7. **cracked black pepper to taste**

**Directions**

1. Dice avocado, tomatoes, and green onions.
2. Peel and chop hard-boiled eggs.
3. Reserving 2 tbsp. basil for garnish, gently toss first five ingredients in a small bowl. Add pepper to taste.
4. Toast baguette slices and smear with ricotta cheese.
5. Top with avocado mix and garnish with chopped basil.

*adapted from Recipe source: USDA Mixing Bowl, Produce for Better Health Foundation: https://whatscooking.fns.usda.gov/recipes/myplate-cnpp/avocado-breakfast-bruschetta.*
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