Strategy 10 Seek Resources

People feel best when they are not vulnerable to the transitions that occur as they age. The key is to create a level of security for yourself that melts away worries and allows you to function better so you can live the life you want to live. Seeking resources to support your aging transitions is a smart approach to healthy aging.
Transitions Impact Your Health

We know people are often significantly stressed by their transitions in life. We all become stressed by the transition from an active work life to a retirement lifestyle or shifting to managing a chronic health condition.

Transitions create significant potential threats to your physical, emotional and cognitive health. Retirement can diminish your sense of purpose and reduce your social interactions. This can create an adverse effect on your cognitive function and your mood. Physical issues can be accommodated, but dementia cannot be reversed, or its progress prevented, once it begins.

Recognizing you are in a transition is the first step to minimizing its impact on your health. You then need to evaluate how well your current lifestyle and living environment support your opportunities for healthy aging as you transition through the aging process.

Assess Your Resources

It has been known for decades that health begins where you live, learn, work and play. Yet most older adults are resistant to stepping back to evaluate how well their surroundings support or hinder their ability to age well.

The home that safeguarded you and your family when you were younger may now be a safety hazard. Steps become harder to navigate and home maintenance becomes more challenging. If it becomes too hard to go out, you may become secluded in your home and reluctant to tell anyone you are lonely. Social isolation minimizes your quality of life and can result not only in depression but also a decline in your cognitive function.

Engage in a candid assessment of the resources you have in your life that contribute to your health and well-being. You may not be able to totally control how you age, but you can exert great control over how you respond to your transitions by smart use of all your resources.

Take Control of Vulnerability Gaps

Most people spend years looking forward to a healthy retirement. Yet they often do not focus on identifying what they need to do to ensure they can actually live a healthy retirement. Those who desire to age well look for ways to reduce their vulnerabilities. They take control to minimize the impact of these potential challenges.

By identifying the vulnerability gaps in your life and lifestyle as you transition through the aging process, you can take full advantage of all the resources available to you. Your resources include your home, transportation, opportunities for social interactions, and access to good nutrition. Prepare the legal documents necessary to ensure your wishes are clear in the event of illness or death.

Make sure you take advantage of resources that ensure social interaction, create opportunities for on-going learning, and offer access to proper nutrition. Incorporate resources to keep you safe and help you maintain your independence. Explore new resources and tools to enhance your quality of life.
Final Thoughts
Planning ahead to take advantage of all available resources will reduce your stress. Frankly, it will also reduce the stress of those who love you. They may have already identified your vulnerabilities, but are afraid to talk to you about them. They may even be considering the options for your future. Best to be a part of the discussion and ensure you access the right resources to maximize your potential for living the life you want.

Take Action Now

- **Review your environment.** Evaluate how well your current living environment and social network enhances your health. Consider what resources you need to support your healthy aging.

- **Create a Life Plan.** Develop a personalized plan so you can maintain control over your life as you age. Find resources offering you flexibility as your needs change. Don’t wait until you are in the middle of a crisis.

- **Plan ahead.** Review Mayo Clinic Advance Health Care Planning to prepare your living will and advance directives for medical decisions. Address other important legal issues associated with aging.

- **Engage community resources.** Contact 2-1-1. This three-digit number connects you to a free and confidential referral service through United Way to find community services, resources, and volunteer opportunities.

**GOAL:** Identify one gap in the resources you need to sustain a healthy lifestyle and determine how to fill it.

Expert Insight

**Ericka E. Tung, M.D.,** Geriatrician in the Division of Primary Care Internal Medicine at Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota.

“Times of transition are challenging for all of us. The loss of friends and family members can be disheartening. You may worry about changes in your own health status. The key to navigating these transitions is to first focus on what is most important to you (your values and goals). Next, consider what resources might foster your own resilience and well-being during this life transition. Good planning and communication with loved ones is key to your success during life transitions. Look for resources to provide you with the elements to age well. Delegate responsibilities to others so you conserve your energy for the things you want to do. Be an advocate for your own health and wellness. For example, if driving is a source of stress, perhaps it is time to sell your car and investigate other options for transportation. Make sure your living environment enables you to stay connected to others within your community. And remember - we are all in a state of continual self-improvement until the day we take our last breath. Adjust to the transitions by making important changes to incorporate resources into your life that allow you to remain active, strong, flexible, and engaged.”
Charter House
211 2nd Street NW
Rochester, MN 55901
507-266-8572
www.charterhouse-mayo.org
email: charterhouse@mayo.edu
Find us on facebook

Dan Abraham Healthy Living Center
565 1st St SW
Rochester, MN 55901
507-266-4688
dahlc.mayoclinic.org
email: dahlc@mayo.edu
Find us on facebook