

Growing Old Together

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When you first meet the love of your life you picture *growing old together* as the two of you with grey hair – but otherwise unchanged – holding hands and gazing at a sunset. This phrase takes on a whole new meaning when you actually have grey hair and are of post-retirement age.



After retiring, you and your sweetheart will face circumstances unique to couples. You may discover your interests and habits have diverged over the years. Your partner may plan to spend the next thirty years with a recliner and a remote and you may plan to go zip-lining in Costa Rica with the grandkids. (This is based on a true life situation!)

Then there is the reality that you don't *grow old together* at the same rate. One of you will face illness or physical limitations that results in the other partner's role changing to that of "caregiver". You are then no longer *growing old together*; you are assisting your partner in aging. While you live in your home you can pay for home health and services to help keep you there but you will still welcome breaks from caregiving supplied by friends, neighbors and family.

If you move to a senior community, you have easier access to home health and neighborly support but you will continue to be the primary caregiver, especially if you're in independent living. If you move together to an assisted living or even memory care setting, you will discover that while you are spending a lot more money for care for your partner, they will still expect YOU to be the one to assist them because you are near at hand---like at 3am!

What are some ways to make growing old together easier on couples? There are many types of resources to support the caregiver and also provide breaks in caregiving. These types of services range from overnight care in a respite setting to adult day services to companion care. But what is really welcome is the offer from a trusted friend or neighbor to spend some time with your partner so you can nap, shop or even attend a caregiver support group.

While you might not have many opportunities to hold hands and gaze contentedly at the sunset, these moments do happen and whether you are the caregiver or the care recipient, they are, as you imagined, one of the best parts of *growing old together*.