

Is assisted living too social for me/my parents?

It is important to find the right match when searching for living arrangements. Moving from your home into shared living is a big adjustment no matter how good the fit. Many people reject assisted living as an option if they are not sociable or have become withdrawn.

Many adult children describe their parent as “a loner” or “not very social.” Some people become withdrawn after losing a spouse, if they have been taken advantage of financially or if they have lost the social support system. Then there are people who have been solitary their entire life and are not like to change after 85.

Is assisted living a good option for you/your parents? Well that depends upon the individual community. While assisted living communities are bustling with activities and people, it is possible to maintain a good level of solitude for those who need it. Most activities in assisted living take place in a variety of settings. The schedule will include group activities of all sizes. Some take place in the building and some involve outings or bus trips. In a smaller community with fewer residents each person is noticed a bit more throughout daily social activities.

While participation is encouraged, it is not required. Social activity, even eating in the dining room, can lead to increased quality of life and better health. If you feel your loved one would benefit from increased social activity be sure to let the staff know how you feel. They can encourage greater participation in social events.

Some people who had become withdrawn while living alone or while caring for a sick spouse become quite social once they move into an assisted living. Some spouses, when widowed, find a new “sense of self”. An assisted living community will allow them the opportunity to relate to other seniors who have had similar life experience.

Many communities form support groups around a chronic illness like Parkinson’s Disease. And then there are the gardeners, the puzzle champions, the knitters and the card and wii players. It’s amazing what happens to a “loner” when a fourth is needed for Bridge.