

Charting the LifeCourse



Aging

LIFE DOMAIN



LIFE STAGE



As we age, our lives can change a lot. Sometimes we can make change happen, while other times it is a natural part of life. If we worked our entire adult life, retirement can be both welcome and scary. Our friends and family we lean on may not be around anymore or be able to be a part of our lives as they once were. The following are some things to think about and plan for ahead of time to make the change to the 'golden years' more comfortable.

This guide is to help you think about some of the questions to ask, options to consider, and things to talk about with your aging loved one. Choices and decisions you and family member make during this time can help to positively shape the future and the life they will live as they get older. This guide is based on *Charting the LifeCourse: Experiences & Questions*.

Charting the LifeCourse: Experiences & Questions presents questions to ask or consider in different life domains. Life domains are the different aspects and experiences of life that all people consider as they age and grow from childhood into adulthood and, eventually, the aging stage of life.

The LifeCourse framework was created to help individuals and families of all abilities and all ages:

- develop a vision for a good life,
- think about what they need to know and do,
- identify how to find or develop supports,
- and discover what it takes to live the lives they want to live

Individuals and families may focus on their current situation and stage of life but may also find it helpful to look ahead to think about life experiences that will help move them toward an inclusive, productive life in the future.



Daily Life & Employment

What a person does as part of everyday life—school, employment, volunteering, communication, routines, life skills

We all deserve to spend our days doing things that make us feel good about ourselves. As we get older, the types of things we do during the day may change. If you have a job, you might want to keep working but you also may want to retire and will need to plan how you want to spend your time. These questions can get you started thinking about what your everyday life might look like as you get older.

- Is there a hobby or new interest I would like to learn more about?
- Do I need help with budgeting or paying bills?
- Can I afford to retire? Do I have funds or support to replace my income if I retire? ★
- What does my perfect day or week look like?
- How can technology like magnification, hearing aids, special tools, or other technology assist me to live as independently as possible?
- Are there classes or community centers nearby that I might like to attend?
- What skills or experiences do I have that can benefit my community?



Community Living

Where and how someone lives—housing and living options, community access, transportation, home adaptations and modifications

Sometimes when we get older, we need more help to live where we want and near the people and places we have always enjoyed. It is important as we get older to think about whether we can get into and around our home easily if our mobility changes. We might eventually need help taking care of ourselves (personal care, daily activities) and staying safe at home.

- How can I be supported to age in place (stay in my own home)?
- What home adaptations or other living options are available to help me stay in my home and community as I age?
- If I am still living at home with my parents, or family, or other people, what will happen when the people I am living with are no longer around – where will I live, and with whom?
- Are there community resources for seniors I can get, such as Meals on Wheels or housekeeping assistance?
- How am I getting around to all the places I need and want to go?



Safety & Security

Staying safe and secure—emergencies, well-being, guardianship options, legal rights and issues

As we get older we need to make sure we take good care of ourselves and make sure we are safe and protected both physically and legally. These questions can help you as you think about your safety in your home and the community, as well other issues about your legal rights and how to plan ahead to make sure important matters are taken care of ahead of time.

- What are my legal rights and protections as I age?
- Have I updated my LifeCourse materials for future caregivers to easily follow?
- Am I at risk of falling or other hazards?
- Is there assistive technology that will help me stay safe as I age?
- Are there home modifications that will help me stay safe?
- Do I have legal documentation of my end-of-life wishes? ★
- Is supported decision making or another alternative to guardianship in place to protect my rights as I age?

As we get older, our bodies and minds need even more care and attention to stay healthy and feel good. We all age differently, so it is important to think about the diet and activities that will work for our own unique needs. The following questions can help you start thinking about the things you need to stay physically and mentally well and what to do if you do get sick or need health care from a doctor or a hospital.

- Am I staying as physically active as possible?
- Who else understands my medical needs and is available if I need help communicating my needs to others?
- Are there disability-related health issues about growing older I should be aware of?
- Am I learning about changes in my body and health as I get older?
- Who will help me create end of life documents and make my wishes known for medical directives? ★
- Am I preparing and eating healthy meals and snacks?



Healthy Living

Managing and accessing health care and staying well – medical, mental health, behavioral health, developmental, wellness and nutrition

When we have relationships we can count on and are connected to a spiritual life, the chances we will have the help and happiness that we want in our lives are much greater. Meeting and seeing other people in our daily lives, as well as in our faith communities, can help us as we age and experience major changes in our lives. These connections with others can help us live longer, happier lives.

- Have I made my end of life wishes pertaining to my faith known to others? ★
- Which technology can I use to help me keep in touch with friends and family over the phone or internet?
- What opportunities do I have to make/maintain friendships? ★
- Do I have friends that are close to my age that share my interests?
- What hobbies or interests am I pursuing in my spare time? ★
- Are my beliefs and spiritual wishes being considered and respected?
- Do I need extra support to fully participate in my faith community as I am aging?



Social & Spirituality

Building friendships and relationships, leisure activities, personal networks, and faith community

Being known and valued in one's community gives a person a sense of worth and of being a contributor and a good citizen, not just someone who needs assistance. Being a good citizen is more than just voting. Now is the perfect time to find out how you can get involved by donating your time and talents as a volunteer or serving as a leader in your community to make a difference.

- Am I leading my planning and support meetings?
- Am I interested in volunteering or giving back to my community in other ways?
- Do I still exercise my right to vote?
- Do I need extra assistance to vote at the polls, or do I want to vote with an absentee ballot?
- Am I involved in policy/systems change activities?
- Are there any causes or issues I am passionate about?
- Do I have support to express my political beliefs if they are important to me?



Citizenship & Advocacy

Building valued roles, making choices, setting goals, assuming responsibility and driving how one's own life is lived



SERVICES & SUPPORTS

Resources and strategies to promote the development, education, interests, and personal well-being of a person and that enhances individual and family functioning

We all use a variety of sources to help us get through our daily lives. We rely on our own assets and capabilities. Most of us have people in our lives that do things for us (and vice versa). We tap into technology as well as businesses, organizations and resources in the community. Even though you might need support or access paid services, remember to consider your personal strengths and other supports that are available.

- What personal assets and strengths do I have that will help me accomplish my goals and live a full life?
- Who do I have a relationship with that cares about me and who can help me with the things I need and want to do?
- How can I use technology to increase my independence and social interaction?
- What places and resources in the community do all people use?
- What kind of eligibility supports could I access and how can they help me live a good life?



FAMILY UNIT

What the family unit needs to support and be a successful part of their family member's life. Supports that are directed to the family will ultimately benefit the individual.

YOU define who your family is. It might be people you are related to biologically or your friends and neighbors. All people have a family. Most people live with or near their families. Individuals and their family may need supports that adjust as roles and needs of all members change to keep the connections between all the members in the family strong and healthy.

- Who will "be there" for me when both of my parents are gone?
- Are my extended family members and other supporters knowledgeable about the things that are important to me?
- Have you left a "road map" on how to best support me if you are no longer able?
- Who will emotionally support me if a close family member or friend passes away?
- Are we celebrating important traditions and spending time together as a family?

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This quick reference guide is a starting place to the aging point in time, to give you some key points and issues to consider, and to help you and your family to have a smooth and productive transition from adulthood to aging. In addition, there are detailed and in depth guides and information available for each of the life domains. To obtain the full *Charting the LifeCourse: Experiences & Questions* booklet or any other LifeCourse materials, contact Missouri Family to Family at 800-444-0821 or online at <http://mofamilytofamily.org>.

Charting the Life Course: Focus on Aging

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