

To move to town or to stay in the country. Who makes the decision?

I recently chatted with a neighbour at our rural post-box, and he remarked, "Don't quote me but we are planning to move into town." He is in his early seventies and his wife, late sixties. They are making that choice primarily to do it while they are young enough to both go through the process and also make new friends in a new neighbourhood. And they are making this choice because of the anticipated inability to drive that often happens to older people. We are about a ten minute drive into Courtenay.

Clearly there is no "right" decision for a senior about moving or not moving closer to amenities. The important piece is who makes the decision. A friend whose husband died a few years ago told me that on her first visit to her doctor after her husband's death, the doctor said, "well now you will have to move into town". Her response: "Why on earth would I do that when I know all my neighbours and would know no one if I moved?" She continued to thrive in her rural home.

While there are seniors who have no plans to move into town and are holding out for self-driving cars, and more aids to track them if they were to wander (to provide peace of mind for their kids), there are also seniors who will plan a move into town as the "right" thing to do. Maybe they were always planners? Maybe the hold-outs, are living in the moment and still enjoying just being out of town. Then again, maybe the classification is not that simple.

Did you just say "let's do it!" when you were in your forties, and have a spontaneous approach to decision making? Or did you always want to know what was around the next bend before you put your foot forward? Maybe peace of the

moment works for some of us, but peace of mind can only be achieved for others by taking the future in hand, and making conscious decisions now about what we are likely to face in the future.

The important piece is that, as long as you can, you are the one (or ones for a couple) that need to make that decision, using the skills you have always employed for decision making and not relinquishing this important function, unless it is clear that your decision making is completely unreasonable, and you do need to be protected. The difficulty is where is that line between self-determination and safety. And at what point does the peace of mind of others start to dictate decisions that you are capable of making?

You may or may not plan to move into town in your seventies. But you do need to have conversations with your kids so they understand the importance for you of making these decisions. And you do need to stand firm when you are competent to make decisions, and resist pressure to have those decisions made for you.

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