



When It Comes To Senior Care, It's All About Percentages (*and not the kind that you're thinking!*)

By Bill Fenner, Retirement Living Executive Director

During the course of a conversation I had with my mother some years ago, she asked me the usual “laundry list” of questions about my family, my work, my day and whatever else she could think of so that she could be satisfied that all was well in my world. At some point during our time together, I must have been lamenting the fact that something had gone awry that day, or maybe two things.

She got that look on her face that only a mother can get (you probably know the one I’m talking about), but I couldn’t figure out what it was that would come out of her mouth next.

This time, it was a pearl of wisdom that I have carried with me ever since, whenever I think about the lives of the seniors that we serve. She reminded me how many things there are in my life (kids, work, home, vacation plans, etc.) and how many variables there are within each of those major topics. “You must have a thousand decisions to make and things to do on in any given day,” she said. “If five of them don’t go right on any given day, that’s an incredibly small percentage of your day.”

“But, you get to be my age (she’s now 78), your father and I may have 10 things going on in our day. If five of ours go bad, that’s a full 50% of the day. So, just remember how big the small things are to people our age.”

Serving the senior population is a gift that many of us enjoy. We work with a segment of the population that lived through far tougher times than have the baby boomers and subsequent generations. They come from a different time, where respect was perhaps far easier to earn, and to give, than it is today, and people were typically good for their word. In fact, they come from a time when it seems like they didn’t even have first names. In my family, we were taught to address anyone in my parents’ age range as Mr. or Mrs. So-and-So.



Ensuring that nothing goes wrong for our clientele should be at the top of our priority list each day. Did you tell Mrs. Olson that you would get back to her before 3 PM today about the time the movers would be at her house? Do you think she waited by the phone until 3:30 for your call? When you finally reached her, did you address her as “Mrs. Olson,” or was it something less formal? Had you thought to ask her how she wished to be addressed?

Life goes fast for many of us. We hear time and again how important it is to slow down, to stop and smell the roses. Yet we keep going faster and faster.

Be aware that there is a slow lane in life. Whether our clients have chosen to be in that lane or are in it due to life circumstances over which they had no control, many of them are there. It is important that we understand this, and to know that most elders still feel and think about 30 years younger than their actual ages, and they still want the respect that was part of their world so many years ago. And that it’s the little things that go right that are important to them.

Remember, it’s all about the percentages.

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