



# Safe and Happy AT HOME

BY BETH PROPP

“Look, I put a pull cord on my ceiling fan before you got here,” she said. Confused, I looked, and sure enough an uncurled, yet still wavy piece of twine hung in the breeze as the fan churned.

“How’d you do that?” I asked, waiting for an answer I wasn’t sure I really wanted to hear from the 88-year-old woman standing in front of me.

“Well, I stood on the chair. It was safer than the stool.”

What do we do when we think our aging loved ones need help or may not be safe but they insist on staying in their own homes? When the goals of safety and independence clash, there’s often conflict between older adults and their children, according to geriatrician Dr. Leslie Kernisan, MD. So how do we avoid

that conflict as families? Here are some tips to help strike a balance between safety and happiness.

## Have Essential Needs Delivered

Driving to the grocery store and loading heavy groceries into the car and house can be challenging for seniors. Employing an internet-based delivery service like Shipt to get essentials from local stores delivered to your loved one’s door may help. Many communities also have access to Meals on Wheels, and qualifying is not difficult.

Medication refills can also be simplified. Set prescriptions up to be delivered by mail—check with your local pharmacy for options. Knowing your loved one has fresh food and their prescriptions, but not having to personally spend the time to get them, may be a big relief for a caregiver.

## Prepare the Home

Common and simple changes to increase home safety include:

- Installing rails to aid mobility.
- Removing floor hazards.
- Putting frequently used items within reach.

Try to remember your loved one is very familiar with their home, so make changes slowly. Walking to the bathroom, moving around the kitchen, and similar activities are almost instinctual because they’ve done it for years. The familiarity of reaching for a countertop, dresser, or favorite chair is pre-programmed safety.

While it’s important to put safety above aesthetics, try to provide as much choice as possible. Remind your loved one that the goal is to keep them in their home. Arranging

help with cleaning or yard work may be nonnegotiable, but which cupboards get rearranged and what furniture is moved requires artful discussion. Look for the wins, and listen to objections. The chair you think should go may be the one remaining reminder of their spouse.

## Seek Peace as a Caregiver

As caregivers, we often spend a lot of time anticipating and worrying our loved one will fall or do something nonsensical. Arguments about potentially dangerous tasks, like driving, using step stools, and cooking, can be common. The worrying can be exhausting, as can the controlling.

As caring families, we must remember that our loved ones are adults with the freedom to make these decisions. Acceptance of that can allow your peace, their happiness, and reduce conflict.

*Beth Propp is a compassionate healthcare professional with decades of experience as a registered nurse, family caregiver, patient advocate, and educator. She has become a Certified Master Trainer for AGE-u-cate Training Institute, where she enjoys helping others find empathy and compassion for those suffering from dementia. Beth resides in Green Bay.*



**KAUKAUNA MEALS ON WHEELS**  
Kaukauna, Little Chute, Kimberly, Combined Locks  
St. Paul Elder Services  
(920) 766-6020 x212

**MOBILE MEALS – FOND DU LAC**  
Fond du Lac ADRC  
(920) 929-3113

**OSHKOSH FAMILY INC., MEALS ON WHEELS**  
Homebound Oshkosh only  
(920) 651-3316

**OUTAGAMIE COUNTY NUTRITION PROGRAM**  
OUTAGAMIE COUNTY ADRC  
(920) 832-5178

**VALLEY VNA MEALS ON WHEELS**  
Homebound in Neenah and Menasha only  
(920) 727-5555

**WINNEBAGO COUNTY NUTRITION PROGRAM**  
(920) 725-2791 or (800) 922-7760

## MEDICAL EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES

*Suppliers listed typically sell, rent, or loan a range of home medical equipment and supplies. Check also the Aging & Caregiver Resources section.*

**AGNESIAN HEALTH SHOPPE**  
CPAP Supplies & Equipment  
307 Camelot Dr., Fond du Lac 54935  
(920) 926-5277  
agnesianhealthshoppe.com

The Agnesian Health Shoppe features home medical and respiratory equipment, including CPAP, BiPAP, and supplies. On-site respiratory therapists are available to assist with

all respiratory and sleeping needs. CPAP specialists can help replace worn masks, tubing, and filters for a better and healthier night’s sleep. A reorder supply program is available where CPAP/BiPAP supplies can be mailed directly to homes.

## AGNESIAN HEALTH SHOPPE

Home Oxygen Services  
307 Camelot Dr., Fond du Lac 54935  
(920) 926-5277

agnesianhealthshoppe.com

An extensive home oxygen product selection gives patients a choice for their lifestyle and comfort, with equipment designed for each individual’s home oxygen needs. Certified oxygen technicians provide individualized care plans and teach individuals how to use their equipment, offering services such as: ongoing consultation, personal follow-up on patient compliance and needs, and assistance with respiratory equipment when traveling. Products include: oxygen concentrators, portable lightweight cylinders, and portable oxygen concentrators and home-fill systems.

## CAPTEL® CAPTIONED TELEPHONE

CapTel, Inc.  
(920) 540-0704  
captel.com

Ideal for people with hearing loss, the CapTel Captioned Telephone works like any other telephone with one important addition: it displays every word the caller says throughout the conversation.

**HME HOME MEDICAL**  
(800) 236-2619  
hmehomemedical.com

**LOAN CLOSET - MEDICAL EQUIPMENT**  
Fond du Lac County Health Department  
(920) 929-3085