

When it's finally time to take away the car keys



We all joke about having “senior moments,” those times when we put something down and almost immediately forget where we put it, or we walk into a room and forget what we were about to do. Most people don't consider either situation alarming, but what if your loved one got lost on the way to the grocery store or some other place they had been to dozens of times before?

Recently, 84-year-old Dorothy of Rehoboth was supposed to

drive herself to a dentist appointment, but somehow ended up about 10 miles away at a post office. Fortunately she remembered her home phone number and was able to call her husband for help. When he arrived, he hugged her and with tears in his eyes told her it was time to take away the keys.

Taking the away the keys is a tough decision that many children and spouses are going to have to make. It's never an easy conversation, but all too often it's one that many people wish they had before an accident or tragedy.

Safe driving is no longer possible once a person's vision, hearing and/or reaction time have become impaired by age, or once diseases like Alzheimer's and dementia have robbed them of such cognitive abilities as memory, judgment and understanding.

In Dorothy's case, it wasn't the

first time she had taken a wrong turn. Fortunately, her husband found the strength to take away the keys, but a lot of people are reluctant to do so because they fear their loved one will see it as a loss of their freedom and dignity. We make sure that is not the case. Our Visiting Angels help seniors (and disabled adults) maintain their independence, and continue a more active lifestyle. Giving up the keys is tough, but gaining a compassionate new friend makes it easier.

For Dorothy, her new “angel” drives her to doctors' appointments, accompanies her shopping, runs errands, or just takes her to the park or boardwalk for an afternoon stroll. Her new friend also prepares meals, helps with housework, and assists with personal hygiene. Dorothy's husband appreciates the rest, and now knows she's safe when she's not at home.

Our Visiting Angels do everything possible for a better quality of life for people like Dorothy, and they provide peace of mind.

First, recognize that driving is not only important as a means of transportation, but for most people – and especially men – it is deeply related to a sense of freedom and independence. The day we earned our license was

for most people our personal Independence Day. Expect emotional responses during this time; resist the urge to point out any recent mishaps; and be ready with real solutions.

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