

The Need for Purpose and the Need for Validation

One of the more meaningful aspects of my role with Laureate Group is guiding families through unfamiliar circumstances, specifically related to long term care and their loved one. As a part of that, I often find myself sitting in a client's living room facilitating a conversation between parents and adult children. I had such an experience just recently.

It began as a phone conversation with the daughter of an elderly couple in their 90's. Dad has been trying to care for mom, but it's begun to adversely impact his own health. The family wants mom and dad to move to a senior community, but dad is resistant. When I asked what's holding him back, she indicated he's become stubborn and that has hindered their ability to have productive conversations on the subject. I asked if "stubborn" was a word they would have used to describe him for many years, or was it something new. It was new. That instantly suggested to me that he was likely struggling with something tied to his current circumstances. I offered to meet with her parents and family and see if we couldn't dig a little deeper into her dad's thoughts. It's hard to have a productive conversation when you don't know what's really on their mind.

Despite being prepared to address a "stubborn" man, I found a kind and caring soul who was overwhelmed by losses he'd faced in recent years. He could no longer drive. He used to be pretty social in his career but now found himself seeing few people each day. He'd also recently realized that he was constantly asking his family to do things for him, which is not something he was overly comfortable with. It was less about being a burden and more

about feeling the loss of purpose. *What was left for him when there was so much he couldn't do?*

After he took me on a journey of his childhood exploits, his adult career, and his retirement, I took the opportunity to validate the many contributions he's made in his life. *It wasn't until his life had been validated that we could begin to talk about the next phase of that life.* We discussed the need to look forward, to consider the senior community he and his family had explored. It was important to acknowledge that there are things he can no longer do, but instead of dwelling solely upon the losses, he had to honestly consider the things he can do. He needed a little help to see that. For example, he has a magical smile that could warm the heart of anyone in his presence. He can converse with people who are lonely and would enjoy listening to his stories. And that's just the tip of the iceberg of valuable contributions he has to offer.

As we concluded our conversation, he graciously gifted me a couple toys for my grandkids. Not just any toys, but ones that he made with his own hands. Like I said...just the tip of the iceberg.

Struggling with having productive conversations with a loved one about the need for change?

Call our Laureate Cares help line. It's a free service where anyone can call to ask questions, investigate options, and have a professional listen to their story and help them find the best solution for their situation. Call Laureate Cares at 262-832-7113.

*This article is a reprint of a blog posted by
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For over 40 years, Laureate Group, a local, family owned business has been helping older adults and their families manage the challenges of aging. Laureate Group operates eight senior communities throughout the Greater Milwaukee area. Additional resources can be found at:
blog.laureategroup.com • www.laureategroup.com • Laureate Cares: 262-832-7113