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QA@H “Ready or Not” Workshop and Tool-Kit

Though most seniors want to age in place, most lack a concrete plan for making that happen. This facilitated workshop helps participants take charge of their life using a structured approach to planning for the many critical decisions facing all of us as we age.



QA@H’s **Ready or Not** program, designed by and for the members of our Village, is a planning tool and 3-4 session workshop that builds on our Village’s three quality of life pillars: connection, purpose and empowerment. The scope of the **Ready or Not** activity is to provide:

- A tool to help our members organize and plan for aging in place,
- An educational program to provide our members with knowledge they’ll need to thrive,
- An opportunity to collaborate and develop practical strategies for staying healthy, safe, connected and independent at home.

Over the course of the workshop, participating households (e.g., spouses or partners, singles, or families) use the **Ready or Not** workbook as structured “homework” to spark conversations about visions and fears, challenges and opportunities that will impact their ability to age in place. After tackling each workbook section individually, households come together along with the facilitator, a QA@H member who is trained and certified in mediation and problem-solving techniques.

During these joint meetings, participants share stories, learn to access helpful resources, and brainstorm practical solutions to common problems. The facilitator encourages the group to explore and address issues - and creative solutions - that participants may not have imagined on their own, all while ensuring that privacy and appropriate boundaries are maintained. Although each household ends up with its own plan, this group effort encourages participants to dig a bit deeper and think more broadly.

Topics covered by the **Ready or Not** workbook include:

- What is important to us?
- What might happen to us in the future?
- What are our options (e.g., stay home, move somewhere...)?
- What can we do to prepare?
- What resources will we need (e.g., short-term home health, long-term financial management, family support)?

The tool includes links to useful resources to help participants make informed decisions.

Some of the challenges participants are encouraged to tackle head-on include:

- At what point does it not make sense to stay at home, even with help? How will you know? What are your options?
- Who will act as your advocate, even if you are in assisted living or a continuing care community?
- “Moving in with my daughter” is not a plan; it is simply a wish. What do you need to do to turn it into a workable plan for both yourself and your family?
- What do you do if there is a sudden, major unforeseen claim on your finances (such as a family member’s unexpected needs)?

QA@H is committed to changing our culture’s story about what aging looks like. **Ready or Not** helps move the narrative about aging from a scary and depressing development to a practical vision of a vibrant and vital future. Participants move from “What If...?” to “Let’s Go!”

As of February 15, 2022, sixteen QA@H members have completed the **Ready or Not** program. Our goal is to continue offering this valuable resource to members at least once a year. This grant will go toward purchasing the necessary materials along with funding the cost of the meeting space as well as marketing costs to help increase participation.

Survey responses from past **Ready or Not** participants illustrate that the experience has been “life changing.”

- “**Ready or Not** seriously changed how we look at our future.”
- “We now feel we have a better handle on what we need to do to prepare for the future. Turns out it’s a whole lot more than just insurance and a financial plan!”
- “I now feel I have the resilience I’ll need to cope with what may be an uncertain future.”
- “We knew we needed to have these discussions about our future, but it felt complicated, overwhelming, and frankly, something we preferred not to think about. Having gone through the workshop, though, we are now on the same page and feeling good about being proactive. We think of this as a gift not only to us but to our families.”

Take for example the story we heard from Clara (not her real name). At 73, she was healthy and active. In fact, she often volunteered to help other members of our Village. Still, since her only daughter lived out of state, she had some concerns about what she would do if she developed health problems. Clara had no plan in place because she had not needed it. This workshop helped her visualize the future, consider her options, and make decisions now, before a devastating illness or debilitating crisis occurred. As part of one group working with our skilled facilitator, Clara progressed through each section of the program, carefully detailing her **Ready or Not** plan. She shared the tool with her daughter and used it as a starting point for discussing some potentially thorny issues. Now organized and with a plan in place, she says that she doesn’t fret about what might happen. Both Clara and her daughter feel a sense of relief, knowing they are prepared and on the same page.

The facilitator of the **Ready or Not** program noted that presenting this course and working through it with the members was extremely fulfilling. Not only did he get to know some of the Village members much better, but he was able to provide a sense of peace, making the future seem less frightening for them. He said, “It was clearly evident that this program had a positive impact on the attendees. They now feel more in control and prepared to deal with life’s uncertainties.”

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