

How to find the right active adult community for you

New book offers tips from a local woman who has been through the experience.



As the South Florida population ages, the number of seniors moving into independent living communities continues to rise.

Reasons for the transition include widows and singles getting lonely and tired of living alone in large empty houses; people not wanting to cook and fix broken items around the house; and a longing for more stimulation and activities to keep aging well.

A few years back, Dorothy and Jack Herman started hearing about friends making the “big” move to different independent living communities.

While researching the places she and her husband were considering – they ultimately moved to Sinai Residences in Boca Raton – Herman also began writing a book about the experience: “Searching for Your Best Independent Living Residence.”

Nowadays, she says, her friends and neighbors consider her an “expert” on the topic.

“I wrote this book because I wanted to help other people in my situation make the right choice,” Herman said. “You need to pay attention to all of the details and ask all the right questions to ensure you find the right place for you to live out the rest of your days happily and healthily. Everyone needs to be educated. I believe it is important to know as much as you can before making such an important decision in your life.”

The following is an excerpt from Searching for Your Best Independent Living Residence, which is available for purchase on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com).

Searching for Your Best independent Living Residence

By Dorothy Herman

Every time we visit our children in another city, my husband and I meet with friends from our child-bearing years. It is a great time to catch up on our lives. A few years ago we were

Dorothy Herman wrote ‘Searching for Your Best Independent Living Residence’ while researching communities for her own move. PHOTO BY MELISSA PERLMAN

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surprised when they told us they were on a list for Independent Living. How could this be? They were our age (late seventies) and the idea had never been on our radar.

My friend explained that her brother-in-law needed to be in Assisted Living and his wife had to travel an hour each way from her home to visit him. Our friends decided that they would rather be in a place where, if needed, one could live in Assisted Living while the other spouse lived in Independent. This would allow the well person to visit many times during the day and still have a life where one could be with friends and continue enjoying personal activities.

We thought about this for them, but dismissed the idea for us. We were happy in our over 55+ community and didn't see the need.

A year later we were dining out and a friend we hadn't seen for a long time stopped by and told us that she and her husband had moved into Independent Living the previous month as her husband was on a walker and rarely left their private home. Now he was able to use the elevator to go downstairs and enjoy the many activities available. We were invited to dinner, tour the facility and see their apartment. It was lovely, but at this time, not for us.

These are two examples of moving into an Independent Living Residence. (IL) There are other reasons for taking this step. At a certain age you may want to be a member of a safe community where you will have fewer household duties such as yard work, fixing or hiring other people to do the work, cleaning the house, planning and cooking meals.

The life you crave would be more relaxed with new friends and activities. If married, another concern would be when one spouse dies and the other is left with a house and all of the responsibilities. An older person living alone may someday need an aide. Staying alone in your home with help limits interaction with other people and engagement in mental and physical activities. Many senior living articles encourage social interactions for a longer, healthier, and a more interesting life.

As our 55+ senior community aged, I noticed that there were many widows



One of the factors Dorothy and Jack Herman (fifth and sixth from left) considered when choosing an independent living community was proximity to their kids and grandkids (from left: Jill, Jessica, Evan and Adam). COURTESY OF DOROTHY AND JACK HERMAN

living alone or with twenty-four-hour aides or those that came four hours a day to help with personal dressing and showering. Some were not able to drive anymore and counted on assistance from aides, family or friends. They were at the mercy of workmen to fix things around their home and in the yard. It was difficult to do lunch with friends or meet to play cards. They were lonely and no longer feeling a part of the community.

Most people wait too long to move into Independent Living. Perhaps a scare, such as a fall, limited mobility, or the loss of a spouse might motivate someone to move into IL. However, the key element is to move before these life changing moments, so you are able to enjoy all that is offered for as long as possible. Many people say, "I wish I had moved in earlier, but I thought I wasn't ready, so I waited too long." It is better to move in sooner than later so that you don't miss out on those additional years that you could have been enjoying all the amenities to the fullest.

We are grateful that we moved into IL when we did. Though it was a change of address, not that far from where we previously lived, we were able to continue with our friends, doctors and activities. At the same time we made new friends, participated in many new offerings, joined committees and have a more stimulating life.

TIPS FROM AN EXPERT

Considering making the "big move"? Here are some of Dorothy Herman's suggestions:

- Investigate all the details so you will be happy with your choice. Ask yourself, can I be happy here? Can I fit in here? Can my personal items fit in here?
- Take your time and don't rush the decision.
- Know why you are moving and know your needs. And then prioritize those items. Make them non-negotiable.
- Understand your expenses and how much you can actually afford.
- Seek out expertise from resources in your life.
- When you finally decide where you will move, introduce yourself and tell people that you are new. Get to know your potential future neighbors.

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