

BOOK REVIEW

Aging in the Right Place

Author: Stephen M. Golant, Ph.D.

BY ERIKA T. WALKER, MBA, MSED, CSA



Did you ever feel you were in the right place at the right time? As an aging industry consultant, I believe it is part of my job to make sure I am up to date on research and trends facing older adults and the business of aging. Reading *Aging in the Right Place* will broaden the knowledge of both inexperienced and experienced industry professionals. Surprisingly, however, the benefits of reading this book became even more evident and meaningful in my personal life.

As I was reading, my eighty-seven-year-old widowed father was transitioning into his “next home.”

Needless to say, my family was filled with concern, emotion, and confusion as we sought the right location for our Dad who had lived in his three-story, five-bedroom home in the suburbs of a mid-size Tennessee town for forty years. How could we help him find peace and belonging as well as the right care in a new living situation?

Researching and replicating best practices since 2002, I know about senior living options (CCRCs, Independent Living, Assisted Living, Skilled Nursing), live-at-home caregiver support services, and industry trends such as aging in place, aging in community, the

greenhouse movement, co-housing, the village concepts, and so on. If you want to know what these concepts are—how they work, and what are the new directions in these arenas—you will find that information in *Aging in the Right Place*. However, this book is so much more.

With a central theme of “aging successfully,” author Stephen Golant, Ph.D., has done an excellent job of realigning the confusing world of finding the right living and care support situation for older adults by introducing the concepts of *residential comfort* and *residential mastery*. What are these concepts and why are they so useful? The bottom line is they bring the decision right back to where it should be—the older adult who is the customer, the client, the person who is most influenced by this living arrangement.

As my family was helping my father make a decision on where to live, I constantly assessed the book's two broad categories. *Residential Comfort* captures whether older people feel that their residential settings are pleasurable, comfortable, enjoyable, and memorable places as well as free of hassles (p. 27). This category clarifies whether older adults believe they are experiencing the good life and are actively engaged in life. *Residential Mastery* captures whether older people occupy residential settings in which they feel competent and in control. They report feeling influential, dominant, autonomous, secure, powerful, strong, encouraged, confident and unafraid (p. 29). Further details on both categories are carried throughout the book.

Finding a living arrangement and support care that closely fulfills both of these categories, whether at home in a place they have lived for many years or in a senior living housing location, truly facilitates aging successfully. Keeping these concepts in mind, my family helped my dad move to an assisted living in his current hometown where he is connected with his friends, church, grandchildren (thirty miles away), activities, socialization, in a pleasant atmosphere with an apartment-like setting. Is it perfect? No. Does the current living situation allow him to experience *residential comfort* and *residential normalcy*? Yes, as much as possible. Will his current living situation be the same forever? I hope so, but if not, we will find him a new location and support systems where he can find the closest thing to *residential comfort* and *residential normalcy*.

Stephen M. Golant, whose Ph.D. is in social geography and social gerontology, is a professor of geography at the University of Florida (Gainesville) and previously was an associate professor at the University of Chicago. He has been conducting research on the

housing, mobility, transportation, and long-term care needs of older adult populations for most of his academic career. With decades of professional experience in the field as well as personal experience as a family caregiver, this exceptional and cohesive text is essential for gerontology, long-term care, health care, housing, planning, and public service professionals, practitioners, and academics.

Expansive in its coverage, *Aging in the Right Place* examines the current role of family assistance, private sector housing and care initiatives, and government programs, along with the potential of smart home technologies, innovative planning, and long-term care solutions. It is the most up-to-date and comprehensive resource covering the impact of residential and care settings in older adults. Providing a complete overview of current living arrangements and residential options for older adults, this book also offers a unique perspective on the often overlooked emotional challenges aging adults face when their residential needs must be evaluated.

Yet, the book tries to cut through the marketing hype of all these aging-in-place and moving options. Often, they are offered solutions that are poorly implemented or do not respond to the totality of their unmet needs. Stephen Golant's approach allows for solutions to meet the needs of older adults and their families, helping them remain active, healthy, and independent no matter where they are. As Dr. Golant states, “Achieving Residential Normalcy is a difficult balancing act....and there are many pathways to aging successfully.” Despite their best coping efforts, older Americans must often settle for the least imperfect places to live, with a balance of both desirable and undesirable qualities.

I strongly recommend *Aging in the Right Place* as a professional resource on the most recent trends in living arrangements, aging issues, and caregiving, as well as instruction on a very valuable method for decision-making. As stated in this review, it has already provided me with great value, both professionally and personally. •CSA



Erika T. Walker, MBA, MSeD, CSA, is owner and CEO of SAGE WAVE Consulting, LLC, in Greer, South Carolina. She conducts strategic planning with businesses and communities across the country to help them prepare for the growing aging population. She has served as director of the SAGE Institute, and director of geriatrics at Greenville Hospital system. Contact her at 864-313-9691, or visit www.sagewave.net.

Aging in place thus raises the risk of isolation as one's ability to drive declines. Credit: Shutterstock. Of course, people can wait to move until the time comes when the old homestead is no longer suitable for them. The other challenge that arises all too often is finding a suitable new home in the same community, one that is smaller, located close to shops and other destinations and accessible by public transit. The absence of good close-by alternatives is another reason many people often don't move late in life or why, when a move becomes inevitable, they are forced to leave their communities behind. (More: [How Will Housing for Grown-Ups Change?](#))

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What housing innovations can help people age in place, or find a comfortable new place? And how does Denver's booming market factor in? This program is in collaboration with AARP. This program is part of the *Connected & Creative Aging Series*. No registration is required. Want to be reminded about this event? Complete the form below to have an email notification sent to you 24 hours prior to the event. Email. Submit.