

What is Relocation Stress Syndrome?

Also referred to as Transfer Trauma, Relocation Stress Syndrome (RSS) is a formal nursing diagnosis defined as a “physiological and/or psychosocial disturbance following transfer from one environment to another”. RSS can manifest itself through an increased risk for falls, self-neglect, weight loss, illness and even death.

What are the symptoms?

Anger
Anxiety
Aggression
Confusion
Crying
Depression
Distrust
Falls
Grief
Loneliness
Negativity
Changes in Sleep
Withdrawal

What steps can be taken to reduce RSS?

The best way to prevent or reduce the symptoms of RSS is to **INFORM** all parties involved in the decision-making process.

Involve the senior and his/her support system in all decision-making. Gather family and friends to gain insight and input.

New surroundings can be frightening. Be sure to provide the resident an opportunity to explore his/her new living arrangements.

Familiar things should surround the senior. Providing consistency can ease the transition. Bring some familiar and recognizable items for them.

Open the lines of communication. Ask the hard questions and be prepared for honest answers. Allow the senior to ask questions.

Respect the pace at which the senior is prepared to move. Deliberate planning is key to a successful move.

Make the most of your new partnership with staff at the new residence. We are here to help both you and your loved one.



Nothing can totally take away the stress of relocation. For some seniors, the symptoms of RSS are obvious. For others, the changes are more subtle. It is important for the new resident to feel a sense of control during this transitional time. Allowing his/her preferences to be heard and honored will make all the difference in quality of life. Gaining an appreciation of likes and dislikes, habits and hobbies prepares staff to identify changes that may indicate RSS.

Working together, we can reduce RSS and its impact on seniors moving into and within our community.

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Imagine an older adult living in his own home. When family comes to visit for the holidays, they find he is not preparing healthy meals or taking his medication properly. His daughter tells him he'll be moving the next day, away from the home he shared with his wife and family for more than 45 years, to live in a community with nursing assistance. It seems like an abrupt change, doesn't it? Yet this is often the scenario many families face. While the intentions are to keep the father safe, the impact on him is tremendous and often not fully understood.

Even under the best circumstances moving is stressful. Compound this stress with the emotional overload of planning, packing and paying for a move and you have the makings of Relocation Stress Syndrome (RSS).

The interdisciplinary team at Warm Hearth Village is here to help minimize the impact of relocation stress. When armed with knowledge and advanced preparation, the transition to a new living environment or higher level of care can be made less stressful.



2387 Warm Hearth Dr.
Blacksburg, VA 24060

www.retire.org
540-552-9176

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How To Help Seniors With Significant Life Changes

