

**MAKE IT SAFE!**

**A FAMILY CAREGIVER'S HOME  
SAFETY ASSESSMENT GUIDE FOR  
SUPPORTING ELDERS@HOME**

---

*Companion Workbook*

RAE A. STONEHOUSE



**Copyright © 2020 by Rae A. Stonehouse**

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without written permission from the author, except for the use of brief quotations in a book review.

**Disclaimer:** The publisher and the author are providing this book and its contents on “as is” basis and make no representations or warranties of any kind with respect to this book or its contents. The publisher and the author disclaim all such representations and warranties, including but not limited to warranties of healthcare for a particular purpose. In addition, the publisher and author assume no responsibility for errors, inaccuracies, omissions, or any other inconsistencies herein

**Do your own research:** The content of this book is intended to be used and must be used for informational purposes only. It is very important to do your own assessments before investing in renovations or purchasing safety equipment based on your own personal circumstances. You should independently research and verify any information provided in this book and wish to act upon. This publication is meant as a source of valuable information for the reader, however it is not meant as a substitute for direct expert assistance. If such level of assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought. The publisher and the author make no guarantees concerning the level of success you may experience by following the advice and strategies contained in this book and you accept the results will differ with each individual.



Print- ISBN: 978-1-7771565-5-8

Live for Excellence Productions

1221 Velrose Drive

Kelowna, B.C., Canada

V1X 6R7

<https://liveforexcellence.com>

**This page has been intentionally left blank.**

## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	13
<b>Chapter One: Home Safety Overview</b> .....	15
<b>Introducing the 3 As of Personal safety... Awareness, Assessment and Action</b> .....	15
<b>Chapter Two: Home Safety - Indoors General</b> .....	19
Safety Assessment Question: Is house clean & tidy? .....	20
Safety Assessment Question: Is the home safe for a professional caregiver to visit the home? .....	20
Safety Assessment Question: Are emergency numbers posted? .....	21
Safety Assessment Question: Is there a designated danger zone in the home to store hazardous chemicals or products? .....	21
Safety Assessment Question: Is there good lighting in stairways & hallways? .....	22
Safety Assessment Question: Does every room have proper lighting, including walk-in closets? .....	22
Safety Assessment Question: Are light switches installed at the top and bottom of staircases? .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: Are bookshelves anchored to walls to prevent toppling over? .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Questions: Is a smoke and carbon monoxide detector present? .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: Are there any wheeled swivel chairs in the home? .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: Do bedrooms or bathrooms have locks that can be released should an elder lock themselves in?.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: Are doorways and halls wide enough for an elder to navigate with a wheelchair or walker? .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: Are cordless phones within easy reach of the elder? .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Questions: Is the furniture stable?.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: Are furniture cushion levels at the right level to allow the elder to easily sit down? .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: Are electrical cords or cables exposed in a way that could be a trip hazard?.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: Are there any barriers to creating a safe home?	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

Safety Assessment Question: Are bed rails required for the elder sleeping safety? .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is the elder’s bed at a level that allows them to place their feet on the floor when attempting to stand up from the bed? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is the elder’s clothing safe? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Does the home have an adequate heating system or does the elder use the stove or oven to provide heat? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Have you developed an escape route in case of fire and a fire safety plan?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: If the elder uses a space heater, is it placed well away from flammable substances and materials? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is there any evidence of leaks in the home as evidenced by water stains on a ceiling or an interior wall? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Do you have a first aid kit and know where it is? .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Miscellaneous Safety Measures: ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Devices:..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Suggestions ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

**Chapter Three: Assessing Fall Hazards ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Do the steps of the stairs have a non-skid surface?.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are there solid handrails on both sides of the stairway?.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are pets underfoot? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are household pathways clear? ... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Does the elder wear anti-slip footwear within the house?..**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are there grade changes at entrances or between flooring changes? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Do door sills present a potential tripping hazard? .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is there any clutter on the stairs?. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is the elder able to climb and descend stairs easily or with difficulty? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are there any small furniture items that could be a trip hazard? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are the home's high-traffic areas clear of obstacles? .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: If you use floor wax, do you use the non-skid kind? .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

**Chapter Four: Home Safety - Hallways & Stairwells..... Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are household pathways clear?... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Do the steps of your stairs have a non-skid surface? .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are there light switches at the top and bottom of staircases and/or hallways? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is there adequate lighting for safely moving in the hallway or stairwell?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is there clutter or obstacles on the stairs?.. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are there solid handrails on both sides of the stairway? .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are there grade changes at entrances or between flooring changes that could be a trip hazard? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Does the elder wear anti-slip footwear? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Does the elder remove their reading glasses when using the stairs?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

**Chapter Five: Home Safety – Kitchen ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Does the refrigerator contain outdated or expired food items? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Food safety: Do food items have proper storage, expiry dates? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is a thermometer present and is the fridge within a safe operating temperature? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are commonly used items stored towards the front of the fridge? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is there a stable step stool (with a safety rail) for reaching high places? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is food easy for the elder to find without using stools or ladders? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is the elder able to buy groceries independently? & does the elder keep a well-stocked pantry and a variety of fresh fruit and vegetables on hand? ....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are heavy items stored in the lower cupboards and light items in the higher cupboards?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are all the items regularly used in the kitchen within reach? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Do items need to be carried a distance to the kitchen? .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are pots and pans, canned goods and staple foods stored in an easy-to-reach location--between knee and shoulder heights?.. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are spills wiped up immediately?. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Cooking: ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are there automatic devices to turn off the stove & oven? **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Does the elder point pot handles away from the edge of the stove when cooking? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are the stove knobs/dials accessible to the elder? .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are kitchen counters easy for the elder to reach? .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are oven mitts within easy reach when the elder is cooking? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are knives stored safely? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are kitchen work areas adequately illuminated? .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are appliance cords in good condition? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are hazardous items stored separately from food? .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are the "off" and "on" positions on the stove dials clearly marked? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are there scatter mats or throw rugs in use in the kitchen?**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are faucets easy to turn on and off? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**



Safety Assessment Question: Does the elder use the stove or oven for supplementary heat?  
..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Does the elder use a grease splash guard when cooking greasy foods?  
..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is the hot water temperature set to prevent scalds?.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are smoke & carbon monoxide detectors in place and with charged batteries?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Does the elder have a cordless phone within easy reach? ..**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are power cords or power bars in use? Are they overloaded?  
..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Do you have a fire extinguisher in the kitchen, mounted on the wall away from the stove? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are emergency numbers posted e.g. Poison Control, family members? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Does the elder use a walking aid? **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is the elder aware of foods that may interact adversely with their medications? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Devices for the kitchen:..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

**Chapter Six: Home Safety – Bathrooms** ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is the bathroom clean and tidy?... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are all electrical outlets in the bathroom GFCIs? Are they tested regularly? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: If incontinence products are being used, are the used supplies being disposed of properly? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Does the elder’s bathroom door lock have an emergency release so it can be unlocked from both sides? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Does the elder use a walking aid? **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Fall & Slipping Prevention:..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Do bathmats next to the tub or shower have rubberized backing to prevent the elder from slipping? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are grab bars present, properly placed and well anchored to the wall beside the bathtub or in the shower? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: If an elder prefers or is required to use a shower, are grab bars and a nonslip flooring in place?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Does the bathtub have a skid proof bottom? Are grab rails available? is there a bathmat with a non-slip bottom? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are there any trip hazards in the bathroom e.g. loose mats? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: If it's difficult for the elder to take a shower standing up, have they considered a bath seat? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Does the elder fear getting in and/or out of the bathtub? ..**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are cold and hot faucets clearly marked? ... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is the hot water temperature set to the recommended 49°C (120°F) to prevent scalding?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Does the elder test the water temperature before they get into the bathtub or shower?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is the elder able to use the toilet independently and safely? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are cold and hot faucets clearly marked? ... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is there a night light in the bathroom?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: If medication is stored in the bathroom, is it safe & secure? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Do bathroom cleaning products in use create slipperiness?**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are bathroom cleaning products harsh or caustic? .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is mildew present in the bathroom? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is the elder able to use the telephone? Is telephone accessible in an emergency? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Measures for the Bathroom: ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Daily activities of the elder that may increase risk: ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

**Chapter Seven: Home Safety – Bedrooms** ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is there a clear path from the elder's bed to the bathroom? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is there a phone and a list of emergency phone numbers near the elder's bed?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are there night lights or other sources of light on in case the elder gets up in the middle of the night? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is there a lamp or a light switch near the elder’s bed? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is there a light switch near the entrance to the elder’s bedroom? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Measures: ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is the bed height easy for the elder to get in and out of bed? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Assess whether door locks are required on bedroom doors to keep the elder out of other rooms or to prevent them from being locked in theirs..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Devices:..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

**Chapter Eight: Home Safety - The Great Outdoors**..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Do the doorways to your balcony or deck have a low sill or threshold?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are there solid handrails on both sides of an outdoor stairway? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Do outdoor steps and thresholds cause a hazard for elderly residents? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are there stairs outside of the home the elder must navigate to enter/exit the home? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Look at access to decks and porch areas. Is there a step to the patio? Is there a sliding door threshold to step over? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Can the elder reach their mailbox safely and easily? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is the number of the house clearly visible from the street and well-lit at night?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Neighborhood Risks:..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are there any risks inherent to the neighborhood of the elder’s home? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Remain safe in the home:..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is the home safe for a professional caregiver to visit the home? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is there patio furniture that would cause problems for an elder to get in and out of? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are there any damaged steps or cracks in outdoor sidewalks? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are there any hazards such as leaves and ice on outside pathways?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Does the elder use a motorized scooter?.... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are emergency plans in place such as leaving a key with a neighbor in the case of the elder being locked out?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are BBQ grills locked & covered when not in use? .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: If you live in an area that has seasonal snow falls, are there plans in place for timely snow removal?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Miscellaneous Outdoor Safety Devices: ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Does the elder smoke outside? .... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

**Home Use Medical Devices**..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

**Chapter Nine: Electrical Safety** ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is there good lighting in stairways & hallways? .**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Does every room have proper lighting, including walk-in closets? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is there a lamp or a light switch near the elder’s bed? .....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are there light switches at the top and bottom of your staircases and/or hallways? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Is there adequate lighting for safely moving in the hallway or stairwell?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are there night lights or other sources of light in case the elder gets up in the middle of the night? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Questions: Is there a light switch near the entrance to the elder’s bedroom? & Is there a night light in the bathroom? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are controls & switches reachable from a wheelchair or bed? ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

**Electrical Outlets, Power Bars & Extension Cords**..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are electrical outlets or power bars overloaded or used unsafely e.g. daisy-chained?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are electrical cords or cables exposed in a way that could be a trip hazard?..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

Safety Assessment Question: Are appliance cords in good condition? .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Electrical Safety Devices for the kitchen: .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: Is an automatic stove shut off device in place? .	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Electrical Safety Devices for the Bathroom:.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Questions: Are all electrical outlets in the bathroom GFCIs and are they tested regularly?.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Home Heating:.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: Does the home have an adequate heating system or does the elder use the stove or oven to provide heat? .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: If the elder uses a space heater, is it placed well away from flammable substances and materials? .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>Chapter Ten: Fire Safety &amp; Prevention</b> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: Have you developed an escape route in case of fire and a fire safety plan?.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: If the elder uses a portable space heater, is it placed well away from flammable substances and materials? .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: If the elder uses a portable space heater, is it plugged into the wall or to an extension cord/power bar? .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Prevent Poisoning: Carbon Monoxide.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: If the home is older, have you or an electrician inspected the house wiring, fuse box, electrical cords and appliances for safety? .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: If the elder cooks, do they practice safe cooking techniques? .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: Does your elder smoke? .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: Does the elder drink alcohol? .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
Safety Assessment Question: Are flammable and hazardous materials clearly labeled and properly stored? Is there a designated danger zone in the home to store hazardous chemicals or products?.....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>General Fire Prevention Safety Measures</b> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>Chapter Eleven: Ongoing Follow-up</b> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>CONNECT WITH US</b> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>
<b>ABOUT THE AUTHOR</b> .....	<b>Error! Bookmark not defined.</b>

**ALSO BY RAE A. STONEHOUSE ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.**

## Introduction

It is often said “it takes a village to raise a child.”

The same can be said about helping an elder age at home.

Perhaps not a village, but certainly a family.

With advancements in modern medicine, our aging population, on the whole, is living longer.

While many elders are living longer, they are not necessarily living better. Many are living with complex chronic medical conditions, requiring ongoing monitoring and support.

Those who would have succumbed to acute or chronic diseases and ailments in the past are continuing to live longer lives due to the benefits of ongoing medication.

We can't generalize or lump all seniors or elderly people into a one-size-fits-all category. Many seniors remain active, vibrant and mentally alert into their 90s. Yet, others seem old in their early 60s.

Caregiving at home has proven its value in offsetting the high costs of in-facility healthcare, and at the same time, improving the quality of life for many elders. However, educational training and support for caregivers has been in short supply.

Traditionally, in many cultures, the role of caring for and supporting aging parents has fallen to an unmarried daughter.

The caregiving role has changed over the years with many men stepping into the role. There is a current trend of younger people in their late teens and early 20s taking on the caretaking role for their parents who may be aging or suffering from chronic illnesses.

Taking on the role of supporting an elder living independently in the community or living with your family in your home can be an immense and daunting responsibility.

Our formal education and training haven't prepared us to take on the role of caregiver. So how do we do it?

This book is a companion workbook to the main book, **Make it Safe! A Family Caregivers Home Safety Assessment Guide for Supporting Elders@Home**. It can be purchased on-line at <https://makeitsafe.online> for an immediate download of an e-book. A paperback version can also be ordered on the same page.

The focus of this book is to help you as a family caregiver create a safe living space and conditions to support an elder living semi-independently in the community or adapting your family household to support an elder as a member of your family.

**Make it Safe! A Family Caregivers Home Safety Guide for Supporting Elders@Home** started as a module focusing on elderly safety in the Elder@Home Awareness Program which I had been contracted as a consultant to create and facilitate for a local non-profit organization.

This workbook focuses on the safety inspection portion of the main book and is designed for you to take with you when you do your assessment. Spaces are included for you to write your notes or comments in the book.

After our introduction of home safety concerns, we move on to an overview of general home safety matters. We systematically work our way through the home, focusing on specific rooms or areas where we are provided with **Safety Assessment Questions** to answer.

Many of the safety assessment questions are accompanied by **Considerations** to help you decide your course of action as well as the **Rationale** behind the question. That is, why is it important and why do you need to care about this potential problem. Each question is backed up with **Action Items** to suggest what you can or need to do to solve the problem and make it safe for you, your family and the elder.

Each hazardous item identified will also have blank lines included so you may fill in your comments, anything you want to remember or make note of completing your assessment. This workbook is meant to work for you.

**Rae A. Stonehouse, Author**  
**June 2020**





## Chapter One: Home Safety Overview

If you are a parent, you will probably remember what it was like to make your home safe for your children.

Many of the same principles apply when making your home safe for elders. Whereas, with children you are usually protecting them from accessing something that could be hazardous and could cause them harm, when making the home safe for elders, you will also be thinking about accessibility, accommodating decreased mobility and memory deficits.

At the same time, you need to be able to support the elder in maintaining their independence as long as you can and as long as they are able.

In this section we look at making your home safer for an elder to reside with you or making adaptations to the elder's current home, allowing them to live independently, with your support.

Throughout the book I use the terms 'elder', 'senior' and 'loved one' interchangeably. While this book is written from the perspective of helping an older person to live safely either independently or semi-independently in their own home, or yours, the same safety principles apply to caring for someone who is not elderly.

To do so, we will be drawing from the field of personal safety as a way to organize ourselves.

### Introducing the 3 As of Personal safety... Awareness, Assessment and Action.

**Awareness:** As we go about the activities of our daily life, we likely encounter many situations or conditions that are hazardous. Hopefully, we have learned how to avoid or prevent negative results from these hazards.

This is your awareness. You realize a particular situation could be hazardous to you, so you take avoidant or corrective actions to prevent harm or injury.

This section on home safety will serve to raise your awareness on how the safety needs of an elder can be greater than what we may be used to.

I would suspect upon completion of this book you will identify hazards in your home needing rectifying for the benefit of your entire family, not just an elderly person as I did when developing this program.

**Assessment:** At a basic level, assessment is where you will be doing a walk-about inspection of the elder's living environment.

Much the same as a home inspector would do an investigation of a home you were considering purchasing... letting you know what is right or wrong with the house, you will be conducting a safety inspection of the elder's home.

As we work our way through the book, we will be exploring a collection of safety-related questions, focusing on different areas of the home.

The chapters are organized in main areas common to most homes and suggestions are provided to the questions posed.

As you work your way through the content, you will notice there are specific hazards common to many areas of the home. They will be identified in the chapter you are reading. To draw attention to their importance, some will have their own specific chapter examples: Fire Safety and Electrical Safety.

If you can think of a safety concern we missed, please let us know so we can share with others.

**Home Safety Assessment Form:** I have created a set of question sheets you can print and carry with you to complete your inspection. You can download a copy of the form at <https://BookHip.com/SXGMBT>

It can be helpful to use a clipboard when you are performing your safety inspection.

**Action:** It doesn't help anybody if you identify a hazard and don't do anything to resolve it.

Resolving a problem may mean taking a piece of equipment such as a toaster with a faulty cord out of service, repairing a hazard or perhaps undergoing a major renovation to accommodate the elder's needs.

### **Create a Safety Upgrade Budget.**

There are several steps to creating a budget for safety upgrades.

Some fixes you may be able to do fairly quickly. Others may take time to organize and to raise the funds to pay for the upgrades.

Once you identify a safety hazard needing improving, you need to research the options available and determine a cost.

As well, are you able to make the improvements yourself, or will you require a professional tradesperson to make the improvements? This will affect the costs involved in the home improvement.

While we complete our safety inspection, we will keep track of items that may require a budget to rectify.

Depending on where you live, there may be government or NGO (non-government organizations) funds you could access to offset the costs of home safety improvements.



In the next chapter we start our home inspection inside the home. We look in detail at specific hazards and provide commentary on further considerations.

As we work our way through our home inspection, we also look at safety devices that can be purchased to solve safety problems or to facilitate the elder's continued level of functioning.

Please note we are not recommending specific products and you should undertake your due diligence before purchasing any product and putting it into service.

**This page has been intentionally left blank.**

## Chapter Two: Home Safety - Indoors General

In this chapter we look at general areas of safety concern within the home. We expand upon many of them in upcoming chapters.

### **Action: Do a walk about assessment**

Take the **Home Safety Assessment Form** with you and do a walk about inspection of the inside of the elder's home.

If the elder lives with you, you could very well be conducting an assessment of your own home, however with a different set of eyes i.e. with the safety of an elder in mind.

This section of the book is organized by offering you a series of **Safety Assessment Questions**.

We follow along with the **3 A's of Personal Safety** formula discussed in the previous chapter.

Many of the questions present you with the **Rationale** behind the question i.e. the logic or reason behind the assessment question.

Some questions will also offer you **Considerations** to help you make your decision as to determining your next step.

Finally, **Action Items** will be provided to guide you to possible solutions for the hazards you have identified.

### **If you see a safety hazard, make it safe as soon as possible.**

If you see a safety hazard, fix it as soon as possible. It may be a simple fix of taking a defective appliance out of service. Other fixes may take time and/or need to be budgeted for.

As you work your way through the home inspection, make note of items you will need to follow-up on resolving or investigating further.

There are a lot of items in this inspection and it can be easy to want to start solving problems before you complete your assessment.

Stay the course. Complete your home assessment, then create your action plan to resolve items identified. Perhaps solving the easy ones first might be a good start.

Safety Assessment Question: Is house clean & tidy?

**Considerations:** Is the home reasonably clean and tidy? Is the house stocked with dish soap, laundry soap and other cleaning supplies?

**Action Item:** if the home isn't tidy, make note of the fact and return to this item upon completion of your assessment. At that time make a list of areas needing tidying and create a list of cleaning supplies you may need to be purchased.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Safety Assessment Question: Is the home safe for a professional caregiver to visit the home?

**Rationale:** Professional caregivers are trained to consider their own health and safety first. If the home presents a potential hazard to their personal safety, they may deny service until the hazard has been rectified.

If the elder is a smoker, they may be required to refrain from smoking for a specific amount of time to reduce the hazards of second-hand smoke to the caregiver.

**Action Item:** if the elder requires the services of a professional caregiver who provides services within the elder's home, speak to the caregiver about their requirements and/or health & safety needs.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Safety Assessment Question: Are emergency numbers posted?**

**Considerations:** Emergency numbers include: poison control, physicians, most responsible family member, 911 for police, fire or ambulance, an involved neighbor, etc.

**Action Items:**

- a) If an Emergency Number List hasn't been created, make one.
- b) Post the list in an easily accessible location such as the refrigerator.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Safety Assessment Question: Is there a designated danger zone in the home to store hazardous chemicals or products?**

**Rationale:** People with dementia forget the purpose of things and how to use them. They may think wiper fluid is juice or be unaware that the grill is hot.

**Action Items:**

- a. Designate a danger zone.
- b. To make the home safer, turn the garage, workroom, closet, outdoor shed, recycled TV armoire or a large cabinet into a storage place for:
  - o cleaning products
  - o bleach
  - o mothballs
  - o insecticide
  - o paint, turpentine, stain
  - o sharp knives, scissors, box cutters, blades
  - o alcohol
  - o tobacco products, including chewing tobacco
  - o hand and power tools

Better still, remove these products completely from the home and find alternative storage. You could then bring them with you when you visited the home if you required them.

- c. Install key or combination locks on rooms and other storage places containing potentially dangerous items. In addition, use childproof doorknob covers or cabinet locks.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Safety Assessment Question: Is there good lighting in stairways & hallways?

**Considerations:** Make home lighting brighter but prevent glare.

**Action Item:** Provide good lighting where required.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Safety Assessment Question: Does every room have proper lighting, including walk-in closets?

**Action Items:**

- a. Ensure every room has proper lighting, including walk-in closets. Use a nightlight to make it easy to see at night. Battery operated nightlights are available for areas without electrical access.

- b. Place a light (such as a lamp) close to the bed and make sure the elder can reach it easily.

- c. Extra lamps: consider models that turn on and off with a touch.

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_