

From the Parish Nurse

Give Up Driving? What if a friend or loved one is telling me not to drive anymore?

(Third of a three-part series)

The ability to drive represents much more than transportation – it means freedom and independence. It is natural to feel threatened if someone suggests taking away that freedom. Here are some things to consider if someone confronts you:

- Try not to overreact if someone close to you suggests giving up your car and license.
- Listen carefully and consider if the person might be right. More importantly, consider if your driving might be putting the safety of yourself and others at risk.
- Think about whether your driving traits would improve by taking a driver safety course or by paying closer attention to the road.
- Reevaluate your feelings about driving. Are you starting to feel uncomfortable behind the wheel? If so, why are you resistant to giving up the keys? It might be that you cannot imagine life without a car. This is a natural concern, but if your driving skills are not what they use to be, you owe it to yourself to investigate the options.

The good news is that becoming car-free can save you money and help the environment. By the time you factor in car maintenance, the rising cost of gasoline, auto insurance and parking

fees, you may be happy to let someone else take the wheel. You will be doing your wallet and the environment a favor by being bold enough to envision a life without driving.

What are some tips to adjusting to life without driving?

Like any change, adjusting to life without your car will be tough at first. Some tips on making the transition include:

- **Give yourself time** to figure out the options, schedules and availability of transportation in your area.
- **Reach out.** Take people up on the offers of rides, especially if someone wants to make a regular commitment.
- **Make a schedule.** Plan activities on a weekly basis and match up the best ride for the activity. Some activities, like doctor's appointments, require punctuality, and others, like going to the grocery store, might be more flexible.
- **Investigate home delivery.** Find out which services deliver and learn to use the internet for shopping.
- **Remember to plan for fun.** Don't just think in terms of 'needs' when planning your transportation schedule. Outings

for church and social events are just as important.

- **Develop or revive hobbies** that you can do while 'riding,' like reading, knitting, crossword puzzles, etc. You may find you enjoy the ride more when you don't have to drive.
- **Use positive language** to describe your situation and to ask for assistance. Thinking about your transition as one that you *can* handle will help you adjust quickly.

You may think that paid transportation is not affordable, but consider the savings on car insurance, maintenance, registration and gasoline, and plan to use that money for rides.

Senior transit services are often available through your local government, senior-service organizations, and religious groups. For more information, contact your local Area Agency on Aging or see the listing by the State of [Supplemental Transportation Programs](#).

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