



## Independence in ADL: More Valuable than Health and Safety

I was thinking about what it means to be independent in ADL's. My grandparents immediately came to mind. Nanny and Poppy were born around 1910. They were the generation that relied only on themselves. It was their way of life, and it was good.

When they had a job to do, they did it and did not complain. No one helped and they did not ask for it. During the World War, they defended independence. They were willing to suffer the consequences to protect it. They valued independence, and expected nothing less in their lives.



As my grandparents aged beyond 80, their bodies deteriorated due to falls, multiple fractures, emphysema, macular degeneration and cancer. They had a tough time, but thought their problems were just part of being old. They were willing to struggle forever as long as they could live independently at home. They did not complain. Nanny and Poppy struggled far too long. There were many options available to them, but they were not aware of them, and they weren't about to ask for help.

Nanny and Poppy both feared losing their independence more than they feared illness, injury or disease. They down played their difficulties with the family. For them, living independently was far more valuable than their health or safety, and they would not complain or even suggest they were having problems coping.

### **Do What It Takes To Make "Doing Possible"**

In the story about my grandparents, eventually, our family insisted on making some changes in Nanny and Poppy's home. Nanny's vision was pretty bad, as she had macular degeneration and glaucoma. She also had painful arthritis. The arthritis affected her hand strength, coordination, reach, and energy levels.

Poppy had emphysema and cancer. They were both losing their overall strength, balance and flexibility. As a result, their ability to do basic activities of daily living was compromised. They needed help. Here were some of their basic self care challenges involving an inability to safely bathe and shower, some simple solutions, and an estimated cost of the suggested solutions.

## Slipping on bath tub and floor.

### Solutions:

- Added bathtub safety treads on floor next to tub
- Added bathtub rubber mat to reduce slipping
- [Added safety rails](#) for additional support

**Cost: About \$40.00**

## Difficulty safely getting into and out of shower.

### Solutions:

- Removed glass enclosure (to make transfers easier).
- Added a shower curtain (to prevent water from getting on floors and privacy).
- Added padded transfer tub bench: Eliminated need to step into tub.
- Added a hand held shower hose: Eliminated need to stand up.

**Cost: About \$ 200.00**

## Losing balance when soap fell or when washing feet.

### Solutions:

- Purchased a long handled sponge. This eliminated need to bend.
- [Made a soap on a rope](#). This eliminated the need for holding the soap and prevented it from falling on the floor.



**Cost: About \$8.00**

## Getting up and sitting down on commode.

### Solutions:

- Added a raised toilet frame. This reduced the strength needed to lower and lift their bodies, and they could use armrests.



**Cost: About \$ 65.00**

## Limited sight for grooming tasks

### Solutions:

- Increased light bulb wattage
- Added a neck magnifier for personal hygiene. This eliminated the need to hold a magnifier and made it easier to read pill labels and clip finger nails.



**Cost: About \$10.00**

### Compare the Costs

**One time equipment purchase: \$300**

**Assisted living for two for one year: \$72,000**

**Nursing home living for two for one year: \$144,000**

Comparative costs for assisted living for both Nanny and Poppy for one year would have been at least *\$72,000.00!* Costs for one year in nursing home for both Nanny and Poppy would have been about \$144,000. Although Nanny and Poppy didn't put a value on their independence, they both agreed it was great to be living at home.

In cost benefits, the initial equipment costs was 10 times less than the cost of one month in an assistive living community (based on \$3,000 a month) or 20 times less than the cost of one month in a nursing home (based on \$6,000 a month). One year costs in assisted living would have been about \$72,000 for two, and in nursing home \$144,000! WOW OH WOW!!!!