

[Joint Family Life Is the Natural Human Way](#)

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MY TURN

Joint Family Life Is the Natural Human Way

How I convinced my retired parents to join, me in America and live as one family again

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Her normally high yet stable blood pressure soared a bit, and the symptoms were not good. Her head hurt, she had no appetite, the mouth felt dry, the body weak. She panicked, and remembered how her own mother, who also suffered from hypertension and died of a heart attack, had her first stroke around age 55, now her own age. I took her blood pressure. It was indeed high. I drove her to the doctor. He examined her, prescribing stronger medication and rest.

A proud woman, my mother, in her moment of anguish, blurted out how grateful she was with her children. She further added, "Who else but with your children can you ask at liberty to take care of you when you get sick?" I, an advocate of the merits of an extended family outweighing the mutual adjustments the members have to make, was elated by this comment. For a woman who never felt any vulnerability that she could not handle herself, finding that we all need one another must have been hard.

In the last five years, I had done everything I could to prove that I valued the idea of my parents' living with me after retirement for no other reason but to be together as a family. I expressed this sentiment in every letter I wrote to them, with strong arguments upholding the logic behind such togetherness. The tribal being in me reiterated that families ought to live together. This is the way God meant it, I would insist. Modern lifestyles and ways of thinking, I believe, interfere with this yearning to stay together as family.

As part of my attempt to convince my parents that my desire to have them live with me was not for the sake of baby-sitting, I hired a full-time housekeeper who took care of the house, cooked and cared for my boy while I was out working. My housekeeper tactic dispelled any doubts my parents might have had. Moreover, my children are 8 and 6 now, in school till 3 in the afternoon, and I have started working from home.

Then, as part of the same process of convincing them how important it was for me to have them with me, I responded to their need to pursue their interests. Dad, a young 58-year-old, a retired comptroller, enjoyed accounting. I took him to job interviews, and now he is on his second career. Mom, with her music education background, needed an outlet, too, and today she is a music teacher. I thought, now I had earned the privilege of keeping them with me.

I had the added responsibility of making them feel at home in a foreign land, much as they praised this land of opportunities. I even expanded the house to accommodate their more peculiar needs, and threw in a few details that bore the flavor

of their native surroundings.

No doubt, all these reminders make them happy, and at home. Yet, the emotional need to be together as an extended family was never admitted. For me, declarations of love are important. For all the love and affection they showered on their grandchildren, my children, they refused to admit any emotional ties to them.

I often wondered if it was my persuasive powers only that made them stay on. However, I never wanted to find out. But yesterday, Mom said, "Who else do I have the privilege to ask to take care of me when I am sick?" She is right. It is a daughter's privilege to take care of her parents, and I was finally awarded this privilege.

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