

## Strangers in the House: the dilemma of living with in-home services

Jo Massarelli  
SRV Implementation Project  
74 Elm Street Worcester MA 01609  
508.612.7254 [www.srvip.org](http://www.srvip.org)



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### Strangers in the House: the Dilemma of Living with In-Home Services

- I. why is in-home service important?
- II. an exploration of the dilemma
- III. dynamics complicating home-life and in-home services
- IV. some principles for dealing with the dilemma



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### some basic assumptions about home and home-life

a good home-life is a **universal** human **longing**  
home is one of **"the good things of life"**  
most human beings carry **idealized images** of home  
one's real home may or may not **match** one's ideal  
**not** having a home can be **catastrophic**  
the **integrity** of home depends on **preserving** its **ideals**  
in-home services **clash** with home

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## some of what constitutes the “good things of life”

good health	security, protection
home	belonging
family, friends, loved ones	respect
being welcomed	work
having a say	fair treatment
freedom of movement	contributing

ready access to the **places** where **ordinary**  
everyday life is conducted, in ordinary **ways**,  
**doing ordinary things** with **typical** people

## meanings that most people attach to their ideal of home and home-life



life & living  
sharing in love & caring with others  
a place of one's own  
a haven in time of storm  
a sense of identity, roots  
belongingness and a place in society  
history, heritage, tradition, & memories  
nurturance of moral & spiritual development  
opportunities to grow, become, & create  
nurturance of the inner-self; a place to be oneself  
autonomy, freedom, & control  
emotional security & stability  
relationships and a social network  
a place in society and belongingness

## some classes of “home-less” people

### People who live on the street

#### People who live in:

shelters  
psychiatric institutions  
prisons  
medicalized institutions  
“special” schools & similar facilities

#### People who live in places called “home” that are not true homes:

nursing homes  
group homes  
foster homes  
veterans' homes  
children's homes  
retirement homes

what is a home?  
(some thoughts through the centuries)

"What is more agreeable than one's home?"  
(Cicero, 1st century BC)

"Home is where the heart is!"  
(Pliny the Elder, 23-79 AD)

"An Englishman's home is his castle, and his home is the safest  
refuge for all."  
(Sir Edward Coke, 1552-1634)

"Mid pleasures and palaces though we may roam,  
Be it ever so humble, there's no place like home."  
(J.H. Payne, 1791-1853)

"Home, the spot of earth supremely blest,  
dearer, sweeter spot than all the rest."  
(Robert Montgomery, 1807-1855)

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what is a home?  
(some thoughts through the centuries)

"Home interprets heaven. Home is heaven for beginners."  
(Charles H. Parkhurst, 1842-1933)

"Home is the place where, when you have to go there,  
they have to take you in."  
(Robert Frost, 1874-1963)

"Home...where my thought's escaping,  
Home...where my music's playing,  
Home...where my love lies waiting, silently for me"  
(Paul Simon, 1941-)

"Home is the place where I keep my stuff"  
(George Carlin, 1937-2008)

"Any woman who understands the problems of running a home  
will be nearer to understanding the problems of running a  
country."  
(Margaret Thatcher, 1925-2013)

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**Dilemma:**

*(from Greek dilematos) involving two assumptions or two premises, from di meaning two, and lemmat (or lemma) meaning assumption.*

1. an argument presenting two or more equally  
conclusive alternatives against an opponent.
2. (a) a choice, or situation involving a choice between  
equally unsatisfactory alternatives;  
  
(b) a difficult or persistent problem

\*from Webster's (Ninth) New Collegiate Dictionary

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## the two horns of the dilemma



## potential aspects of the dilemma in **receiving** AFC services

### intrusiveness:

lack of privacy  
constantly being or feeling judged & evaluated  
being talked about (via service "staffing" & gossip)

### violation of boundaries:

snooping  
being bossed  
being given unsolicited advice  
being reported on, including to the authorities (fear of)  
incompatibility or a clash of values

### hassle:

bureaucratic rigidity & formalization  
inadequate recourse for grievance

## some summary points about the problems related to the dilemma

1. There is a high degree of consensus about the dilemma and its problematic aspects.
2. Use of services greatly complicates already complicated lives.
3. Having to accept an "abnormal" life.
4. In spite of all of the above, the vast majority do not want to relinquish having in-home services.

some features of contemporary culture  
that are **toxic** to home and home-life

frenetic pace and busy-ness of life  
the mobility and “diaspora” of the nuclear family  
economic patterns that reinforce absence from the home  
decommunitization of society  
displacement of human interaction by technological means

crafting an adaptive mind-set:

a **conscious** and **reflective** effort

to acquire and maintain a coherent **mental  
framework**

in regard to one’s **beliefs** and derivative  
**actions**

craft an adaptive mindset for AFC  
based on 2 assumptions:

1. home and home-life is crucially important  
and worth striving for

develop a **positive vision** of home & home-life  
**communicate** the vision of home and home-life

2. AFC services should foster home-life  
and strive to not impede it

**envision** the “best case” service scenario  
**imagine** the ideal service provider(s)

qualities & characteristics of “outside helpers”  
preferred most by in-home (AFC) service users

- high **valuation** of the recipient's home & home life
- a predisposition to service; a **helping** mind-set;  
an attitude of wanting to be of genuine service
- a **commitment** to doing one's best by/on behalf of the person/family
- **discretion**
- **reliability**
- possession of relevant **competencies**
- **flexibility**
- **respect** for the **boundaries** of household members
- ability to **mesh** with (all) members of the **family/household**

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*Excellent “visiting” in-home helpers...*

...do their work **competently** and  
**unobtrusively**, anticipating the needs of  
the household, addressing them well and  
**without ceremony**. They **fit** into the  
household so **perfectly** they seem, so to  
speak, invisible. At the same time, they  
appreciate that they are also utterly  
**indispensable**.

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