

The Multigenerational Experience

Residents of multigenerational living configurations open up about what it's like to live together.

For British Columbia, Canada-based Matthew Heintl, his wife Kaylin, and his parents, the decision to share a home together—along with two children, two dogs, two cats, and five chickens—was one they made together. By that point, Matthew's recently retired mother Anne was commuting back and forth from the nearby town of Sidney every day to take care of her two grandchildren.

As the city, Victoria, grew increasingly expensive, the option for the older generation to buy something closer wasn't affordable. For that same reason, the younger generation couldn't afford to renovate their existing home either, but they loved their neighborhood and wanted to stay. Pooling their finances, the two generations made a plan to tear down Matthew and Kaylin's old house and build a shared house on the same plot. "We just started talking about it and looking at numbers. And it just made sense," says Heintl. "We're big believers in a family unit that is stronger together than apart."

Sharing a home comprised of two volumes joined together by an airlocked walkway, with the younger family in the larger side and the older generation in the slightly smaller one, the Heintls, like many families living in multigenerational properties, are benefitting from more convenient shared care, shared costs, and more time together. The arrangement allows family members to relieve some of the burdens of life, to give one another a break, to easily lend a hand. Interdependence can actually lead to more independence. Living side by side comes with the comfort of knowing someone is there. →

