

The Eden Alternative

The Eden Alternative is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to remaking the experience of aging and disability across America and around the world. It is a powerful tool for improving quality of life for our elders and for recapturing a meaningful work life for their caregivers. The Eden Alternative is dedicated to supporting others in the creation of communities that eliminate the plagues of loneliness, helplessness, and boredom. These are plagues of the human spirit, not the human body, but they can be just as debilitating and just as deadly as any disease of the body.

The core concept of The Eden Alternative is strikingly simple. We must teach ourselves to see places where elders live as habitats for human beings rather than facilities for the frail and elderly. We must learn what Mother Nature has to teach us about vibrant, vigorous living.

The Eden Alternative shows us how companion animals, the opportunity to give meaningful care to other living things, and the variety and spontaneity that mark an enlivened community can succeed where pills and therapies fail. It also shows us how real leaders can create a warm culture that is characterized by optimism, trust, generosity, and people working together to make a better world for our elders.

INSTITUTIONS CONTROL, HABITATS NURTURE

Most importantly, Eden teaches us that decisions belong with our elders, or as close to our elders as possible. Our elders want, need, and deserve autonomy over their daily lives. Edenizing Homes give it back to them.

The traditional medical model that has been dominant in the care of our elders has many shortcomings. The plagues of the human spirit run rampant in these cold, sterile social and physical environments. Our elders need and deserve an opportunity for a life worth living, not just time spent waiting to die.

Founded in 1991, by Dr. William Thomas, a Harvard-educated physician and Board Certified Geriatrician, the Eden Alternative now claims over 8,000 Associates and 260 registered homes in the U.S., Canada, Europe, and Australia. The staff and management of these homes continue to work towards meaningful cultural change through ongoing training and a continued dedication to making life better for those in their care.

THE EDEN ALTERNATIVE TEN PRINCIPLES

1. The three plagues of loneliness, helplessness, and boredom account for the bulk of suffering among our elders.
2. An elder-centered community commits to creating a Human Habitat where life revolves around close and continuing contact with plants, animals, and children. It is these relationships that provide the young and old alike with a pathway to a life worth living.
3. Loving companionship is the antidote to loneliness. Elders deserve easy access to human and animal companionship.
4. An elder-centered community creates opportunity to give as well as receive care. This is the antidote to helplessness.
5. An elder-centered community imbues daily life with variety and spontaneity by creating an environment in which unexpected and unpredictable interactions and happenings can take place. This is the antidote to boredom.
6. Meaningless activity corrodes the human spirit. The opportunity to do things that we find meaningful is essential to human health.
7. Medical treatment should be the servant of genuine human caring, never its master.
8. An elder-centered community honors its elders by de-emphasizing top-down bureaucratic authority, seeking instead to place the maximum possible decision-making authority into the hands of the elders or into the hands of those closest to them.

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9. Creating an elder-centered community is a never-ending process. Human growth must never be separated from human life.
 10. Wise leadership is the lifeblood of any struggle against the three plagues. For it, there can be no substitute.

For information on the Eden Alternative™, please check their Web site at www.edenalt.com