

## Ask Yourself This

00;00;00;00 - 00;00;15;07

Karen Brown

Welcome to Real Life Renos : The Podcast. I'm your host, Karen Brown, and if we haven't met before. I'm an aging in place and accessibility strategist as well as an educator in all things, leading a life that is independent, safe and dignified.

00;00;15;07 - 00;00;19;10

Karen Brown

Following up on the last podcast about why we need to make decisions.

00;00;19;16 - 00;00;47;20

Karen Brown

I have a list of questions that every older adult needs to ask themselves. I've asked myself these questions to three categories ten questions in each. Are you ready? Let's go. Health and wellness is the category. And question number one. Do I have regular checkups with my doctor, dentist and other health care providers, including routine screenings for vision, hearing, and bone density?

00;00;49;01 - 00;01;16;01

Karen Brown

You might not think about having your hearing checked as being high up on the list of priorities. But believe me, you should. If you're hearing is diminishing, and I know all of our hearing diminishes as we age, mine is certainly. But when it diminishes to the point where you can't be in a room and hear a conversation, you feel very isolated, and then eventually you just stop going to the room.

00;01;16;04 - 00;01;34;26

Karen Brown

The parties, the get together because you can't hear what they're saying anyway. Social isolation is not a good thing. So be sure to get your hearing checked. And you know if they prescribe hearing

aids for you, please wear them. Make sure you're participating in the life that's going on around you.

00;01;34;26 - 00;01;48;09

Karen Brown

Question number two. Am I managing any chronic conditions effectively? Well, that speaks directly to whether or not you understand your chronic condition and what the prognosis is for it.

00;01;48;11 - 00;02;02;06

Karen Brown

Do you understand any chronic conditions that impacted your parents or your grandparents? Don't stick your head in the sand on this one, because early intervention is often the key to a lot of conditions.

00;02;03;04 - 00;02;40;14

Karen Brown

Question number three is my current medication list up to date and reviewed regularly? As I have said so often, every thing that you put in your mouth interacts with everything else you put in your mouth. So you need to understand what you're taking and don't consider only your prescribed medications to be medications. Look at your over-the-counter purchases. Things like antacids or, cold medications, aspirin, allergy medication.

00;02;40;17 - 00;03;12;07

Karen Brown

Those kinds of things may have an interaction with prescribed medications. Also think about teas and CBD and other kinds of alternative medications that you may take because they make you feel better. That needs to be included on a medication list. And that medication list needs to be reviewed by your health care team every time you go there. Don't be shy about having that medication list reviewed by your pharmacist as well.

00;03;12;13 - 00;03;27;07

Karen Brown

Sometimes pharmacists can be much more up to date on medications than your health care team. Question number 4. Am I

eating a balanced, nutritious diet and drinking enough water to support my health?

00;03;27;07 - 00;03;34;06

Karen Brown

The water piece is really important because if you are dehydrated, it puts you at risk for falls.

00;03;34;06 - 00;04;00;08

Karen Brown

Question number five. Am I getting enough physical activity to maintain mobility and strength? Well, there are a couple of pieces to this that I want to bring up. So 10,000 steps a day is something that we have all heard for years as the goal. But let me tell you that some activity is better than no activity, and more activity is better than less activity.

00;04;00;10 - 00;04;24;07

Karen Brown

So if you're just starting out, start go for a walk. You know the weather is getting nicer. Certainly in in my neck of the woods, although there's snow on the ground as I look outside my window and I'm recording this. But it'll go away because spring is coming and it doesn't last. So get out there and walk up to the mailbox to get the mail or around the block.

00;04;24;11 - 00;04;49;12

Karen Brown

Set a goal for yourself and aim to boost it week over week. Strength is another thing we need to look at. We know that we need to lift weights because being able to be strong as we age needs to be a goal. So whether you are lifting jugs of bleach or cans of soup in your house, or you have actual weights, get on that.

00;04;49;13 - 00;05;16;26

Karen Brown

There are lots of YouTube videos that show you how to maintain weight. Did you know that going up a flight of stairs is a force equal to 3 to 6 times your own body weight, especially on the

under surface of the kneecap? I just wrote an article about this the other day on theoldish.com, and it was based on a study that looked at the benefit of stair climbers in a gym versus climbing stairs out in the wild.

00;05;16;26 - 00;05;41;13

Karen Brown

So in your home or in a mall, for instance, if you're going up to the second level. So check that out. Question number six. Am I getting enough sleep and is it restful? A lot of people that I deal with are concerned too, downright frustrated because they really want to get 7 or 8 hours of sleep a night.

00;05;41;15 - 00;06;04;10

Karen Brown

But you know what? They forget to include is that 1 or 2 hour nap they had in the afternoon. So no wonder they're frustrated when they wake up at four in the morning. They've had enough sleep. Make sure you're paying attention to sleep hygiene. There are lots and lots of articles on the oldest scam on sleep hygiene. Question number seven.

00;06;04;13 - 00;06;30;00

Karen Brown

How is my mental health? Do I experience stress, anxiety, or depression? I think this is something we all need to look at. I can tell you that I've been experiencing more anxiety recently than I have in years gone by. We have a federal election coming up in Canada, and of course, there is all of this stuff happening in the US and how that's impacting the rest of the world and looking at how things are changing.

00;06;30;02 - 00;06;39;28

Karen Brown

My social media accounts are blowing up hourly, if not minute to minute, and I actually find that quite anxiety inducing.

00;06;39;28 - 00;06;58;29

Karen Brown

So I have had to develop a practice of turning off my social media at a certain point before I go to bed at night. Now, the articles that I referred to on The Oldish and sleep hygiene do say turn your social media devices and your TV off an hour before bed.

00;06;59;01 - 00;07;29;06

Karen Brown

I'm really bad at doing that. I confess I'm really bad at doing that. It doesn't cause me depression, but I certainly see a difference when I turn off my social media an hour or so before I go to bed, my sleep tends to come faster and be more restful. So, you know, if you are experiencing stress, anxiety, or depression because of anything in your life, I urge you to seek the fixes for it.

00;07;29;09 - 00;07;55;28

Karen Brown

If it's mild, perhaps you can mitigate stress or anxiety with greater exercise or by just turning off social media. Depression is another animal altogether, and if you are experiencing depression, you may need to seek professional help on that and I urge you to do that. There are lots of resources out there as well these days and, you know, some of them are free or low cost.

00;07;56;00 - 00;08;19;03

Karen Brown

Some of them, you don't need to go to an office at all. You can just make a phone call. And there are people at the other end who will help you. Question number eight. How often do I engage in activities that stimulate my brain and cognitive function? Well, playing cards or learning new things. Those are both activities that stimulate the brain and cognitive function.

00;08;19;03 - 00;08;26;11

Karen Brown

And guess what? They're really good for your social engagement as well, because most of the time you're not doing those things alone.

00;08;26;11 - 00;08;47;12

Karen Brown

number 9. Am I maintaining a healthy weight for my age and activity level? We all need to make sure that we pay attention to that. Maintaining a healthy weight is a good thing, not only for those knees of ours that have that extra force going upstairs, but it impacts things like blood pressure, for instance, and heart disease.

00;08;47;14 - 00;09;13;06

Karen Brown

Pay attention to that and make sure that you can be as active as you want to be. Particularly if you have grandchildren. I know that I want to keep up with my young grandchildren. They're not too much of a challenge these days, but they will be. So I'm paying attention to that. Question number ten in this section. Have I considered my long term health care needs, including potential in-home care?

00;09;13;08 - 00;09;37;01

Karen Brown

Now, this is something that we certainly touched on in the last podcast on decisions that need to be made. This is something that you need to make decisions on. Ask yourself about this and understand what your future is, because once you know what the future holds, you can relax because you've made the decisions. The plans are in place and they're taken care of.

00;09;37;12 - 00;09;49;09

Karen Brown

The next section is living arrangements and home safety. Question number one. Is my current living situation safe and accessible for me to age in place?

00;09;49;20 - 00;10;15;11

Karen Brown

There's lots of material out there, particularly on [theoldish.com](http://theoldish.com) and [RenoStudios.com](http://RenoStudios.com) that can help you assess whether or not your living situation is as safe as it might be. It is really important that we live in an environment that is safe and dignified. And particularly if we want to age in place independently, we need to pay attention to these things.

00;10;15;14 - 00;10;42;15

Karen Brown

Question number two. Do I have grab bars, proper lighting and non-slip flooring in place to prevent falls? Roughly 50% of falls happen inside the home, and we can mitigate those things by having things like grab bars put in the proper place, lighting that is adequate, contrast that's adequate. Pull up those area rugs because they are a fall waiting to happen.

00;10;42;17 - 00;10;45;02

Karen Brown

Non-Slip flooring is a good thing as well.

00;10;45;02 - 00;11;02;14

Karen Brown

You can also look at the tread on your favorite slippers and shoes. Because we have a habit of just wearing our favorite slippers down to the point where they are shiny. Look at those because man, that is a slip just waiting to happen.

00;11;02;17 - 00;11;27;09

Karen Brown

Question number three. Is my home easy to navigate in the event of mobility changes? So if you're thinking about doing any renovations or you're just considering whether your house is the place where you need to be as you age look at things like doors. Are they wide enough? If you've got some older doors, they might be 28in wide.

00;11;27;16 - 00;11;43;19

Karen Brown

That's not going to be wide enough. You need to look at something that is 32, 34, 36in wide. Depends on what kind of mobility device might be employed in the future. I'm a really big fan of 40 inch doors on entry doors.

00;11;43;19 - 00;11;45;12

Karen Brown

Look at how you get into your house.

00;11;45;12 - 00;11;47;16

Karen Brown

Look at how furniture is moved in and out.

00;11;47;16 - 00;12;06;24

Karen Brown

How you come in and out holding hands with your grandchildren or holding bags of groceries. I know 40 inch doors are a big step up for most people, and it's not inexpensive. But if you are doing renovations, do take a look at the width of your doors. All of your doors.

00;12;06;24 - 00;12;12;06

Karen Brown

Question number four. Do I have a plan for home maintenance and repairs?

00;12;12;08 - 00;12;37;25

Karen Brown

There comes a time for all of us when those kinds of things become downright challenging, if not difficult. So removing the snow, cutting the lawn, climbing up on a ladder to clean out the eavestroughs. I don't want to see anybody up on a ladder without somebody below who is holding that ladder and making sure that things stay safe.

00;12;37;28 - 00;13;03;23

Karen Brown

And frankly, I'd rather you be the one holding the ladder than the one up on a ladder. So, you know, you need to make sure that you've got a plan to make sure you that your house does not fall into disrepair. And look at whether those plans are something you can afford in your budget. You know, a lot of us tend to lean on our family.

00;13;03;23 - 00;13;27;13

Karen Brown

I know right now I lean on my family, but as as I get older, I want to be able to make sure that I can afford whatever repairs are necessary because quite frankly, my family has a life and they may



not have the skill set to do the repairs that I need. So having a plan to maintain the home that you're in is really important.

00;13;27;25 - 00;13;52;03

Karen Brown

Question number five is my neighbourhood safe and easy to get around in? Well, I certainly hope that all of our neighbourhoods are safe. But in this context, I'm wanting to know if your neighbourhood is safe for you. If you need a mobility device, for instance, if you have diminished sight or hearing, is it still safe for you under those circumstances?

00;13;52;06 - 00;14;25;09

Karen Brown

Is it easy to get around in if you are using a mobility device? Or what happens when you can no longer drive? How easy is your neighbourhood for you if you can't drive? Question number six. If I live alone, do I have a plan in case of emergencies? So think about falls, fire, hydro failure, falls. As I mentioned earlier, 50% are occurring in your home.

00;14;25;11 - 00;14;39;12

Karen Brown

So if you fall in your home and you can't get up. What's the plan? Do you have anybody checking on you? Do you know how to call somebody in case of an emergency?

00;14;39;22 - 00;15;07;13

Karen Brown

Question number six. If I live alone, do I have a plan in case of emergencies? Think in terms of health emergencies, fires, hydro failures. What's your plan? Do you have someplace safe to go? If you have a fall, remember that I said that 50% of them happen inside the home. How are you going to get up? Do you know how to get up off the floor?

00;15;07;13 - 00;15;28;04

Karen Brown

The longer you are on the floor, the less your chances for survival. So you need to have a plan. Fire. Do you have a plan to get out of

your house? Really important stuff that you need to think about and make sure you have a plan that you have rehearsed, that you know where you're going and what you're going to do.

00;15;28;06 - 00;15;50;20

Karen Brown

Question number seven is related to that. Do you have a medical alert system or someone checking in on you regularly? Now this could be as simple as having neighbours that look across the way and see if your drapes are open. Maybe you have an arrangement with one another that you know the drapes need to be open by 9:00 in the morning.

00;15;50;26 - 00;16;20;19

Karen Brown

They need to be closed by 7:00 at night. If they aren't, maybe you just check on one another. Do you have a family text chain? That's what I have. And I have one child who lives close to me and one who lives further away. But we do have an ongoing text chain, and we talk every single day. I feel like if I didn't respond to texts and they thought that I should still be awake, they would check in on me.

00;16;20;21 - 00;16;33;18

Karen Brown

They tend to know my social engagements, where I'm going and when I'm going. They know when I go to bed at night. They know when I wake up in the morning. So if something seems out of character for me, they would check on me.

00;16;34;14 - 00;17;08;07

Karen Brown

Question number 8. Am I financially prepared for potential housing changes in the future? Now think of the house that you live in now, and understand that I deal with a lot of clients who are in rehab, and they're not allowed to go home until they can get in and out of the house safely and independently, and until there is a bathroom that they can use again, safely and independently. For a lot of these people

00;17;08;10 - 00;17;36;02

Karen Brown

they don't live in houses that have no step entry. There are 4 or 5 steps up to the front door. There might be 1 or 2 steps from the garage into the house. The main bathroom with the shower facilities might be on the second floor, as is their bedroom, and that needs to all take place on the first floor because they can't do stairs anymore.

00;17;36;05 - 00;18;01;17

Karen Brown

Or maybe they want to put in an elevator up to the second level so that they can access that second level. You know, there are a lot of things to be considered when our physical condition changes. So do you have the finances available for that or do you know where you can get it? I just wrote an article about preparing financially for aging in place.

00;18;01;18 - 00;18;10;05

Karen Brown

It's on [theoldish.com](http://theoldish.com). You can have a look there. It does give some options that you can consider when you're thinking about this piece.

00;18;10;05 - 00;18;42;04

Karen Brown

Now this leads into question number nine. Do you know what resources are available if you need home modifications? So I'm an aging in place strategist. I work with people who are dealing with this all of the time. And again, I will refer you to that article called Financing Aging in Place in Your Home. It does give you a lot of options, depending on where you live, if you're in the States, you will have state, state organizations available that can help with this.

00;18;42;06 - 00;19;09;24

Karen Brown

If you're in Canada, the options I've provided in that article will help you a lot. Question number ten. Have you considered downsizing or moving to a community that fits your needs better? Think about not having a car. Think about your neighbourhood changing to

reflect a younger demographic and maybe you don't have things in common with your neighbors anymore.

00;19;09;27 - 00;19;25;11

Karen Brown

Or think about not having to look after a large house or a two story house. Those kinds of things might have you thinking about downsizing, which might lead you to think about a community that better fits your need.

00;19;25;11 - 00;19;29;20

Karen Brown

Consider a community of people in the same stage of life that you are in.

00;19;29;26 - 00;19;56;05

Karen Brown

Now, I'm not talking about a retirement home. I'm not talking about nursing care. I'm talking about a community. Sometimes these communities are engineered for sure. Sometimes they just happen organically. And you might have some friends who have moved to a community, and they're finding themselves all settled in and able to find people who are in their same stage of life.

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Karen Brown

So look at what your friends are doing. Look at various communities that are engineered toward older adults, and they might give you some sense of what you should go and look at. If you're looking at or even beginning to consider moving communities.

00;20;14;13 - 00;20;18;24

Karen Brown

The third and last section, social connections and activities.

00;20;18;24 - 00;20;43;14

Karen Brown

Question number 1. Am I staying socially active and engaged with family and friends? You should make an effort to do that. And your

family and friends should be making an effort to make sure that you do do that. Question number two. Do you have a strong support network of friends and loved ones? Think of who you might call if you needed support

00;20;43;15 - 00;21;12;08

Karen Brown

if your partner has a serious illness or, God forbid, passes away. Think of who you would turn to for support during transitions like working to retirement. Question number three. Do you belong to a social club? And I'm thinking about the Lions Club, Rotary, things like that. In fact, I'm looking at that right now myself. They tend to give purpose to the things that you're doing.

00;21;12;10 - 00;21;19;03

Karen Brown

And also they give back to your community, which is an important connection with the community that you live in.

00;21;19;03 - 00;21;45;01

Karen Brown

Question number four. How often do you participate in activities that bring joy and fulfillment? I'm not talking about the kind of joy you get from articles in your home when you're deciding whether to keep them or not. I'm talking about actual going out and doing activities that just make you feel so happy and fulfilled, so you can think about your grandchildren.

00;21;45;03 - 00;22;10;10

Karen Brown

You could think about gardening and even community gardening. You could think about mentoring. So giving back from your skills that you may have used or learned while you were working. Giving them back to people who are younger and could make good use of them. Question number five. Are you involved with any faith-based organizations for those who attend services?

00;22;10;11 - 00;22;18;27

Karen Brown

There is certainly comfort in routine structure and the social aspects of exercising one's faith.

00;22;19;17 - 00;22;45;18

Karen Brown

Question number six. Do you do crossword or word search puzzles every day? I know a lot of people are really into crosswords and word search puzzles like Wordle, for instance. I have a lot of friends who do Wordle. I do one called Connections, and my younger daughter also does it so we share our results every day to see how successful or sometimes not successful we've been.

00;22;45;20 - 00;22;48;04

Karen Brown

I find it really engaging anyway.

00;22;48;21 - 00;23;16;21

Karen Brown

Question number seven. Have you tried learning something new to keep your mind active? Now, right up there at the top of the things that are good to do, to really keep your mind active is learning a new language. I know that a lot of us would have learned a second language in school. For me it was French, but because I didn't then go into a job that used that skill, I haven't retained it.

00;23;16;24 - 00;23;30;01

Karen Brown

Language is a really hard thing to learn as an older adult, but that's what makes it the most challenging. So definitely look at things to learn to keep your mind active. Be a constant learner.

00;23;30;14 - 00;23;56;29

Karen Brown

Question number eight. Do you feel lonely or isolated? And if so, what steps are you taking to address it? I want to reference a study that was done many years ago in Chicago, and the result of the study was that social isolation had the same effect on your

body as smoking a pack of cigarets a day. So that's pretty serious. In terms of how to address it,

00;23;57;02 - 00;24;24;23

Karen Brown

get out there. Just get out there. When you're at the post office, talk to people. When you go to the grocery store, talk to people. Do not under any circumstances use those self-checkouts. Stand in line, no matter how long it takes, and talk to the cashier that checks your groceries through. Talk about the weather. Talk about whatever it is you're going to make with the stuff that you bought.

00;24;25;00 - 00;24;48;06

Karen Brown

Talk about anything but engage. That is social engagement. In addition to all of the other things you might do like going to church, going to the club, talking to your neighbors. You can engage in these ways. Reduce the effect of social isolation on your body every opportunity you get.

00;24;48;26 - 00;25;20;26

Karen Brown

Question number nine. Do you have a way to stay in touch with family and friends who have moved away? Now this is something that our grandparents probably didn't need to address the same way that we do. But we do indeed need to address it. The global economy has changed, meaning that jobs are anywhere on the planet now, and our friends and our children in particular, but our families, they're moving away to be able to access these jobs.

00;25;20;28 - 00;25;52;01

Karen Brown

You can make sure you stay in touch in any number of ways. I mean, social media makes it pretty easy now to find out what each other is doing, but it's not the same thing as talking to them. So make sure that you use the technologies that are available to us right now, whether that is FaceTime, Google Meet, Zoom. You know, you can arrange group chats so that a bunch of you can be online together and catch up.

00;25;52;03 - 00;26;16;13

Karen Brown

You could have lunch together. That way you can enjoy a glass of wine or a cup of coffee. That way. Make the effort. Somebody needs to make the effort to stay in touch. And once you do that, I think you'll find that you will really enjoy these little, these little times when you can spend time with familiar faces.

00;26;16;13 - 00;26;26;05

Karen Brown

Question number ten are you making an effort to meet new people and build new relationships? So just like question number nine, where we want to maintain

00;26;26;05 - 00;26;40;11

Karen Brown

family and friend relationships that we've had for years, there certainly are times when we need to meet new people and build new relationships. I recently listened to a Mel Robbins podcast that dealt with exactly this subject.

00;26;40;11 - 00;27;06;29

Karen Brown

I'm into podcasts, and I'm sure you can find this podcast that Mel did on friendships. But you know, the essence of it is that she said, when we graduate high school and move on, we need to make new friendships. When we graduate university or when we need to move away from our downtown, you know, single life apartment to the suburbs where we're going to raise our family

00;27;07;01 - 00;27;32;03

Karen Brown

we need to meet new people and build new relationships. She did talk also about meeting new friends as we age and move into that stage of our life. So, you know, we might move away from that family home into a smaller home or to a community that is more in keeping with what our stage of life is, and we need to meet new friends.

00;27;32;05 - 00;27;51;14



Karen Brown

It is really not easy to meet new friends as we are aging. You know, it's much easier when we're little kids, but meeting new friends in our older years is just as important, and we need to learn how to do that and make that effort.

00;27;52;03 - 00;28;15;10

Karen Brown

Well, that's the end of our questions for today. You know, for so many of us, life just seems to happen. We don't necessarily take the steps to craft the life we want, but we can do just that. And we need to realize that we can and nobody needs permission to do that. Even if you think you have the best life possible

00;28;15;12 - 00;28;21;12

Karen Brown

I encourage you to take some time and explore how you could make it just that much better.

00;28;21;12 - 00;28;36;21

Karen Brown

Thank you for joining us. If you found it thought provoking. Please hit the like icon and share the episode with somebody who needs to hear the message. I will look forward to seeing all of you on the next episode of Real Life Renos

00;28;36;24 - 00;28;38;13

Karen Brown

The podcast.