



Everything will be all right in the end,
so if it is not all right,
it's not yet the end

DOES FAMILY SUFFER IF YOU BECOME A NOMAD?

by Andrew Redfern

As full-time, international house sitters, meeting other house sitters while travelling the world is a definite highlight of our nomadic lifestyle.

During conversations, one topic that frequently comes up is how we (and they) are dealing with family back home. The scenario almost always seems to involve ageing parents requiring increasing care. It's probably a result of demographics, as those able to travel like we do are of a certain age, meaning their parents are older.

The other situation is juggling significant family events such as weddings or birthdays with a travel schedule planned well in advance. Not to mention the feelings of guilt which can arise around such circumstances.

There are several things you can do to ensure your travels accommodate your family and their needs as well as your own.

Andrew and Christopher, from Global Wanderers, share their experiences and tips for juggling family expectations and responsibilities while on the road.

Talk to them

Before setting out on our travels, Andrew asked his mother what she thought of our plans to experience a nomadic life. She gave her blessing and said, 'You don't have to wait around for us. Go and enjoy your life!'

We return regularly and visit her, possibly more so than when we lived in Sydney. In fact, our travels are a topic of conversation among our parent's friends. Several of them now follow us on Facebook. One couple has even taken up house sitting with our help and tips on how to get started.

Often what may seem an awkward conversation can give a very unexpected answer. We now know we can travel with our parent's full support and they, in turn, remember we are only a flight away.



Be prepared for the inevitable

Aware that someday we may get a dreaded message about the death or serious illness of a family member, we devised a strategy early in our house sitting career.

Whoever's family member it was would return home with the other staying to honour our house and pet sitting responsibilities. During our interview/video chat with potential homeowners, we tell them this, reassuring them that we won't abandon their home and pets.

Having this plan in place means decisions don't need to be made in stressful times - it is merely a matter of enacting a previously thought out plan.

Solo sitters can also have a plan and these are questions that can help:

- Do the owners have someone who can take over in case of an emergency?
- Have you an emergency fund in case you need to return home unexpectedly?
- Does your family know that you may not be able to return immediately should something happen?
- Is there a family member you can rely on to help with immediate support if you aren't able to get a flight back immediately.

Trust the universe

It may sound cliched, but the house sitting lifestyle has proven to us many times, that allowing things to happen will mean, all will be well.

One of our favourite quotes from "**The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel**" movie, and now a life adage is:

Everything will be alright in the end. And if it's not yet alright, it is not yet the end.

Eight months into our house sitting life, we returned to Sydney for a few months to catch up with friends and family. During this time, Christopher's father (Bill) fell ill, was diagnosed with dementia and subsequently had to be relocated into aged care. We were around and able to assist with this transition.

Then in 2018, we again had some time in Sydney. During this time, Christopher's father had a stroke and passed away a week before we were to depart for a house sitting job in Melbourne. The timing could not have been more fortuitous.

We had spent several precious months with Bill, were able to arrange his funeral, finish off our house sits in Sydney and fly to Melbourne as planned.

It is the only time Christopher has wished we had our own place, as we were juggling three house-sits during the time of organising the funeral. But we managed and were thankful that it all worked out. And our sit in Melbourne coincided with the wedding of a university friend of Andrew's which was announced after we secured our sit there. Surely this is more than coincidence?

Recently, Andrews father needed doctor visits and hospital tests in Sydney, where we are currently house sitting. He lives in rural NSW, but how fortunate we were able to accommodate his parents (Bill and Marie) and juggle hospital visits.

Our homeowners were delighted we could share their home with them. It also saved other family members having to come to Sydney, find accommodation, transport etc. The universe will really work it out if you trust and let it do its job.

Use technology

We probably have more regular contact with our family now that we are on the road. Using messenger apps and video chat, we keep up with what each other is doing. Photos can easily be shared and commented on. Andrew taught his Mum and Dad to use FaceTime, and we regularly send printed postcards using our own images via the Australia Postcards app.

We use Skype credit to allow for cheap phone calls to family, and our Skype number will enable them to contact us anywhere in the world.

Technology actually provides for more accessible and regular communication, and we certainly take advantage of this facility. This included live streaming Christopher's father's funeral to his niece in London who wasn't able to return to Australia.



Plan around family events

Time with family and loved ones is precious, and when we do have the opportunity to catch up, we love getting together and sharing a meal. We recently hosted Christopher's brother and wife for a barbecue at our house sit, with the owner's permission and blessing, of course.

Later this year we will hopefully attend Andrew's nephew's wedding, which is taking place nearby a house sit we've secured in northern Victoria. Unfortunately, we weren't able to be at Andrew's Dad's 80th birthday, but provided a fun quiz about his dad for the party guests to complete.

One couple we know got inexpensive flights to return home to surprise a newly arrived grandchild (and her parents)!

Be open to opportunities and the options will present themselves.

Conclusion

The nomadic, international lifestyle doesn't have to be at the exclusion of family. Many sitters we've met tell similar stories to our own. Sits are booked around family events, or they find themselves serendipitously nearby when loved ones needed them.

It seems to be an innate calling to return home when needed (even if you don't know it at the time). Grandparents, who are also sitters, communicate regularly with their grandchildren via Facetime, and some grand kids even get to travel to their grandparents' house sits.

Anything is possible - it's just a matter of rethinking expectations and finding an alternative path. Accommodating your own family and their requirements is not really a juggle but another aspect of the wonderful lifestyle we know as house sitting.

author bio

Andrew and Christopher have been full time international house sitters since May 2016 when they packed up their Sydney apartment and headed to New Zealand.

Known as Global Wanderers, they love exploring the world as locals and making connections with homeowners and their adorable pets.

Currently on their 42nd house sit, you can read more about them at www.globalwanderers.com or follow them on Facebook & Instagram: @globalwanderersoz