

How to Mentally and Practically Prepare To Move Your Parent Into a Higher Level of Care

A Guide to Alleviating Some of the Stress That Comes With This Life-Changing Event





One of the most challenging decisions...

One of the most challenging decisions facing any family is to decide when, or if, to move a loved one to a nursing or assisted-living community. After all, it's difficult realizing your loved one requires a high level of around-the-clock care, which you may not be qualified for or able to provide on your own.

You may wonder how you can remain sensitive to your loved ones feelings as you move forward with what you know needs to be done.

It can be reassuring to come to the realization that moving to a nursing or assisted living community is something many people are currently going through. Many individuals like you face this dilemma every year, which means you are not alone in dealing with the problem. As a result, there are a variety of resources available to explain the steps.

Throughout these pages, you will find information that will help you and your family decide when the ideal time to make the move might be. We'll talk about the signs to look for when a loved one needs assisted living, the planning process and how to make it a smooth transition.

If you consider moving your loved one to an assisted-living facility, the information in this guide should answer many of the questions you may have. After reading this guide, you and your loved one may have an easier transition because you know exactly what is involved.

Aging

Getting older is a natural process of change. Aging is more distinctly noticeable in children and older adults. When we are at the peak of our physical abilities, usually in our 20s and 30s, this is when our bodies and our minds are their sharpest. When we get closer to our 40s we start to see changes in our weight, muscles and bones.



Weight

Most of us begin to gain weight gradually in our 30s and 40s, while people in their 50s often start to lose weight. Once we are past age 50, our changes in weight are more noticeable in our face and arms.

Muscles

Due to muscle tissue loss, we tend to experience a steady decrease in physical strength, which becomes more rapid after age 50.

Cognition

Many seniors start experiencing memory loss during the normal course of aging. Difficulty remembering if you've already taken your medications or forgetting if you've eaten are some examples of reasons for concern. More serious examples include when a loved one starts forgetting to turn the gas off on the stove top or goes outside when weather conditions are unsafe.

Bones

Once we get into our 30s, our bodies begin to witness a reduction in calcium, which leads to a decrease in bone mass. Additionally, our bone marrow begins to disappear from our bones gradually. Older adults are at risk of having weak and brittle bones. If your loved one has brittle bones and ends up falling, there is a possibility for severe injury, disability and, in the worst case, death.

Falls are a top cause of accidental deaths and emergency room visits in individuals who are more than 60 years old. Falls can be signs of poor health and declining functionality and are often associated with medical issues. Falls cannot always be prevented, but if your loved one is around medical professionals more frequently they will likely have more immediate help should a fall occur.

Signs That It Is Time To Move Parents Into Assisted Living



The timing is not always straightforward to know when you need to move a loved one into an assisted-living facility. Recognizing the point when long-term care is needed is becoming problematic because many older adults have chronic health conditions that have a low impact on their functionality over time. It's crucial to pay attention to and note any physical or mental signs.

Most times, families wait until a major episode takes place before making this decision. It is too late to explore all the alternatives and your loved one will often times be further along leaving less potential for meaningful and effective interventions to slow their decline. This decision can be stressful, and trying to make it as a result of something that happened is a recipe for disaster. Plan ahead and get your questions answered early to avoid this.

Often when a family member is in charge of the caregiving, they slowly disregard their own well-being. Usually, a family member is caregiving on top of their typical daily responsibilities (i.e., children, job, etc.). As their loved one's condition deteriorates, it can be increasingly difficult for family caregivers to juggle caregiving responsibilities with everything else, leading to burnout, health or financial problems or even conflicts within relationships.



Here are some signs to watch for to get an idea of when it might be time to relocate your loved one into an assisted-living community:

1. Your loved one's physician said that it's time for assisted living.
2. Your loved one makes frequent visits to the emergency room.
3. Your loved one's ability to perform basic tasks of daily activities is declining.
4. Your loved one is becoming socially withdrawn or less interested in activities.
5. Your loved one is not eating well and losing weight.
6. Your physical, mental or emotional health is declining as a result of the stresses of caregiving.
7. Your loved one is struggling with poor hygiene. Some signs include infrequent bathing and laundry, unkempt hair, dirty nails and a bad odor. Sometimes older adults are afraid to bathe without assistance. Memory loss can also contribute to poor hygiene.

If your loved one has specific needs that you are not qualified to handle, that is an indicator that it's probably time to consider a long-term care facility. Remember to be sure not to risk your own health if you are a family caregiver. It's not always a job for one person. That's why it's beneficial to have multiple professionals that specialize in the needs of your loved one, to manage the challenges that come with aging.

Dealing with Guilt

A question that hits many family caregivers is: How can I move a loved one into a next-level-of-care situation when I am overcome with emotions of guilt?

Guilt is an emotion that almost always presents itself in scenarios like this. It's understandable to feel like you are letting your loved one down. During the whole process, you may be met with unexpected highs, terrifying lows and everything in between. These feelings are even felt by people whose loved ones are being cooperative in this process.

These emotions can be challenging, regardless of how common they are. Emotions can make you feel a sense of isolation, increase your depression or anxiety and even cloud your mind and judgment. When you are overcome with caregiver guilt, your emotions can become very strong and may be present for a long time. While you are going through this, be aware of your emotions and plan accordingly to try to manage it.

It's important to recognize, that by moving to a higher level of care, you're helping your loved one get the help he or she needs from qualified professionals. You're also putting them in an environment where they'll have interactions and stimulation throughout the day or night. This will give you peace of mind that your loved one is receiving the services that they need, services that wouldn't have been provided for them in their current community.

Here are some tips for dealing with the guilt that comes with transitioning a loved one into an assisted-living community:

1. Give yourself time — rest assured, these emotions will settle over time. When your loved one is in an environment where the people around them are caring, compassionate and capable, you'll will have peace of mind and recognize that you made the right choice. Additionally, they will be getting more help and services than you likely would have been able to offer on your own.
2. Make in-person visits as meaningful as possible, and if you can't meet in person, set up other ways to connect (i.e., Zoom, FaceTime, phone calls, etc.).
3. Consider counseling, therapy or emotional support from family, friends or other caregivers if you can't let go of your guilt.



The Planning Process

The time you spend researching now will help you later down the road. You will be better prepared for this transition if something unexpected happens. This is a big event, so don't rush. Usually, the best results come from advanced collaborative planning between everyone involved.



Build your plan around this advice:

1. Get your loved one's input early. If your loved one has the mental capacity to contribute to the planning, make sure they feel included in this process.
2. Avoid promises. You don't want to feel betrayed by your loved one, and it's not worth carrying around any extra guilt.
3. Get all immediate family involved. Everyone should put everything on the table and decide who and what will be contributed going forward.
4. Get advice. You'll be able to be more objective, and quickly arrive at a conclusion with recommendations from experts.
5. Discuss residential care and the benefits that come with it. Emphasize the benefits of a residential care facility, keeping in mind that your loved one may have a different perception.
6. Visit local facilities. As you visit each facility, be sure to ask questions and get as much information as possible.
7. Get your loved one on waiting lists. Getting your loved one on a favorite facility's waitlist gives you a better chance of achieving your wanted result when it's time to make the transition.
8. Let it all sink in. Maintain a positive and gentle attitude and give everyone time to process all of the information you gathered.
9. Finalize the plan. Work to determine how responsibilities will be divided throughout the transition process to a care facility.
10. Establish a single point of contact to communicate on behalf of your loved one. Its best to appoint a Power of Attorney when possible. Try to do this when your loved one still has the mental capacity to make that decision. Having a Power of Attorney will make communication and care more efficient as your loved one's faculties decline.

A Seamless Transition

You may have many emotions (i.e., anxiety, guilt, fear, etc.) during this time of transition.

It'll also be a very emotional time for your loved one; they may experience some emotion as well (i.e., sadness, fear, confusion, etc.). You and your loved one should be prepared for moments like these, but be assured that once the transition is over, you and your loved one will be at ease.



1. Remember, like anything else, the stress is temporary.

2. Plan something to do once the transition is over.

3. Finalize details prior to the move.

4. Organize your documents and make sure you know where they are so you can find them quickly.

5. Make a list of the possessions that will be moved (i.e., clothing, favorite chair or pictures).

6. Meet the facilities' administrators and caregivers and discuss any particulars to your loved one's care.

7. Have a visit/call scheduled during the initial transition period.

8. Establish who is going to be the first and second on the emergency contact list.



Buckingham Pavilion can meet the needs of nearly any resident who needs assisted living or nursing care. We strive to provide our residents with the highest quality of life with a consistent focus on a holistic approach. Every day, three delicious meals ensure that our residents get the nutrition they need to engage in an active lifestyle. We also have various social and recreational activities that cater to a wide range of interests making it easy for residents to maintain their lifestyles.

No matter which program a resident is interested in, our staff focuses on providing a high quality of care. In addition to making every resident feel like they are family, our team strives to ensure that there are as many interest and hobby options on the calendar as possible. We make sure that no matter your hobbies, we have options for you.

We view interaction among Buckingham Pavilion residents as vitally import. Our residents find a higher quality of life by participating in hobbies they enjoy with like-minded people. Meaningful social interactions at Buckingham Pavilion with friendly staff and other residents are just part of everyday life.



Contact us today at (773) 973-5333 to arrange a tour of our facility, conveniently located in Northside Chicago. While you may be able to see pictures of our lovely facility, nothing beats the experience of meeting our caregivers and seeing our residents enjoying themselves.

