



NEW HAVEN

ASSISTED LIVING & MEMORY CARE

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FAMILY GUIDE

TALKING TOGETHER

ABOUT DEMENTIA AND MEMORY CARE

Having an open conversation today about memory care options can prepare your family for tomorrow.



THE BEST TIME TO TALK ABOUT MEMORY CARE IS RIGHT NOW

After a memory care diagnosis, it's normal to struggle with grief, fear, and confusion. Being involved in care planning can help a senior regain feelings of autonomy, empowerment, and control that are often lost after a dementia diagnosis.

Dementia is a progressive disease; it will worsen over time. Most people with dementia eventually need full-time residential memory care for their own health and safety. Making a plan in advance can help everyone feel heard, and that their needs are being met.

Set a goal and work toward it in small steps. Come prepared with a clear idea of the available options, and be able to talk through the pros and cons clearly and simply. The helpful tips in this guide can help to ensure everyone gets the answers they are looking for and feels comfortable with the arrangements.

PREPARE THE ENVIRONMENT

Dementia impacts communication. To minimize confusion, optimize the environment for focus.

Start with a clear idea of what options are available. Be able to talk through each choice clearly and simply, presenting the pros and cons of each.



Quiet: turn off TVs, radios, or computers; silence phones; avoid cross-talk



Conscious: Choose a time of day when your loved one is thinking at their best, such as mid-morning



Calm: Choose a calm, safe, and familiar space in which to talk



PROVIDE SCAFFOLDS TO SUPPORT PLANNING

Scaffolds are cues that provide support for building a series of thoughts. These help bring clarity and focus to a discussion.



Make a timeline together to visualize the future



Create short lists, like “5 items that would make it easier to move to memory care,” or “3 things we need to do this month to make mom’s home safer”



Decision making can be overwhelming; simplify choices to 2 or 3 at a time



QUESTIONS TO ASK TOGETHER

Explore different scenarios with all family stakeholders by asking questions like these:

Who will...

keep track of medicines:

drive:

shop:

monitor symptoms:

Who can...

be on-call to help:

provide extra support:

volunteer their time:

Who should...

have power of attorney:

decide when it is time to
move to residential care:

How do we...

evaluate care options

learn more about dementia

help with symptoms?

How do you...

want us to help you

feel about your diagnosis

feel about memory care?

What if I...

get sick/injured:

get burned out:

take a vacation:

What if you...

get sick:

get injured:

get lost:

What do you...

feel scared about

feel guilty about

have questions about

What are some...

things that help you feel safe

anxieties we can address

goals we can set

Other questions...



A NOTE ON TALKING TO OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

If you are providing care for an elderly loved one with dementia, other family members may not understand what it's really like. Be honest and realistic with them about your limits. Set boundaries about what you can and can't handle, with patience and respect. Caregivers who push themselves too far can do more harm than good to the ones they love.

Because it's so closely associated with aging, it's easy to forget that dementia is a medical condition. Like other serious diseases, it will eventually require skilled nursing care. You wouldn't feel guilty about refusing to try do-it-yourself hearing aids or place an IV at home. Memory care for dementia is no different.



WHAT IF IT'S TOO LATE TO PLAN TOGETHER?

A time will come when you may need to overrule your mom or dad for their own health and safety. If this is your situation, keep these things in mind:



Understand that you may not be able to convince them that they need help.



Avoid 'quizzing' questions, like "don't you remember what you said?".



When possible, plan gradual transitions rather than sudden changes.



Reach out for help when you feel overwhelmed, or have questions/concerns.

WE'RE HERE TO HELP

A dementia diagnosis affects the whole family. Make sure that self-care and emotional support for family caregivers is part of your dementia treatment plan. Look for support groups, respite care, and other proactive ways to reduce the emotional toll of caregiving.

With skilled and loving care, a senior can still enjoy happy, fulfilled, and healthy years after a diagnosis of dementia. Contact us today with your questions or to discuss our wide range of care options.



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