

You are not alone

A Guide for Caregivers



Walnut Place

A LIFE CARE SERVICES® COMMUNITY



There's help out there

Becoming a caregiver doesn't come with a how-to manual. It can be overwhelming, especially if all of this is new to you. Even if your loved one is in a progressed stage of a memory-related disorder, we understand you still need a place to find information and get answers to your questions.

If your spouse, parent or loved one needs memory care, it can be tough to figure out the options—so we're here to help you with just that.

WHAT IS MEMORY CARE?

Memory care is care tailored specifically for the needs of seniors with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia. Some options include:

- In-home care
- Adult day center
- Residential care (like a Memory Care Community)

Choosing the Right Option

There may come a time when the person with Alzheimer's or dementia will require more care than can be provided at home. An adult day center is a great option to consider. Adult day centers provide a much-needed break for you as the caregiver. While the person with dementia is at the center, you'll have time to run errands, rest, whatever it is you hope to accomplish. Or maybe you work full-time and need a place to balance your job with the duties of being a caregiver. An adult day center is a good solution for this.

As a guest of the center, the individual has a multitude of opportunities to be social and participate in fun activities revolving around music and light exercise. If resistant at first, wait it out as they soon begin to look forward to going and seeing their new friends. They just need time for adjustment.

If the dementia continues to progress, it's a good time to ask yourself a few questions to help determine if moving your loved one to residential care is a good option.

- Is the person with dementia still safe in their current home?
- Is their health—or mine as a caregiver—at risk?
- Are their needs beyond my abilities to physically help them?
- Has my mood shifted to stressed, irritable or impatient in the caregiver role?
- Would opportunities for social engagement and structure benefit my loved one?

Even if you planned ahead for a move, this transition can be a stressful experience. You might feel guilty and wonder if you're doing the right thing. These feelings are common. Families that have been through the process tell us that it is best to gather information and move forward. Regardless of where the care takes place, the decision is about ensuring the person receives the care they need.

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What to Expect

There are different stages of memory-related illness, and each brings its own challenges.

“Early stage” means those diagnosed are in the beginning stages of the disease. A person in the early stage might experience mild changes in the ability to think and learn, but can participate in the goings-on of everyday life.

During “middle stage,” damage to the brain can make it difficult to express thoughts and perform routine tasks. You may notice the person mixing up words, having trouble dressing and getting frustrated or angry.

As the disease advances, the needs for those in “late stage” will change and deepen. They’ll probably need full-time assistance with personal care; they’ll lose the ability to communicate with words and will most likely end up unable to walk.

What’s important to remember in your role as a caregiver? Focusing on preserving quality of life and dignity. Research tells us some core of the person’s self may remain, even through the late stage of Alzheimer’s. This means you may still be able to continue to connect with your loved one.

TALK ABOUT IT

The diagnosis experience can be an emotional one. Everyone needs time to cope, even the individuals with the disease. It’s best to talk directly and tell the truth. Even if you don’t have all the answers, be honest about what you do know. Everyone will take the news differently; therefore, being sensitive is extremely important.

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Choosing a Care Setting

WHERE DO YOU START?

- Plan on visiting several places. When you're there, talk with the staff, residents and families to get a good feel for the atmosphere.
- Ask them about room availability, cost and if they accept Medicare or Medicaid. If you're paying out-of-pocket, ask what happens if the person with dementia runs out of money.

CHECKLIST

When choosing a place of care for your loved one, there are a lot of factors to consider: staff, environment, programs and the type of treatment residents receive. Use this checklist when considering a move to residential care.

Family Involvement

- Families are encouraged to participate in care planning
- Families are informed of changes in resident's care needs
- Families are encouraged to communicate with staff
- Families are able to participate in care
- Visiting hours work for families

Staffing

- Medical care is provided
- Personal care and assistance is provided
- Staff recognize persons with dementia as unique individuals, and care is personalized to meet specific needs, abilities and interests
- Staff is trained in dementia care

Programs and Services

- Appropriate services and programming based on specific health and behavioral care needs are available
- Planned activities take place (ask to see activity schedule)
- Activities are available on the weekends or during evenings
- Activities are designed to meet specific needs, interests and abilities
- Transportation is available for medical appointments and shopping for personal items

Choosing a Care Setting

Residents

- Personal care is done with respect and dignity
- Residents are comfortable, relaxed and involved in activities
- Residents are well-groomed, clean and dressed appropriately

Environment

- Indoor space allows for freedom of movement to promote independence
- Indoor and outdoor areas are safe and secure
- There is a designated family visiting area
- Residents are allowed to bring familiar items with them, such as photos

Meals

- There are regular meal and snack times
- Food is appetizing (ask to see the weekly menu and come for a meal)
- Family and friends are able to join at mealtime
- Staff have a plan for monitoring adequate nutrition and dietary needs
- Staff provide appropriate assistance based on person's abilities (for example, encouragement during meals or assisted feeding in advanced stages)

Policy

- Discharge policy has been discussed (learn about any situation or condition that would lead to a discharge, such as change in behavior or financial circumstances)

Memory Care at Walnut Place

Caring for those with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia with memory loss offers unique challenges for families and loved ones. At Walnut Place, you'll find dedicated care professionals who understand your fears and feelings. By developing personal relationships with residents and their families, we are able to provide the consistency and familiarity your loved one needs to thrive in a safe and comfortable environment.

Our **Heartfelt CONNECTIONS™ – A Memory Care Program** is what makes us stand out from other communities. It's a distinct offering we pride ourselves on, because it promotes physical and emotional well-being, supports daily functioning and maintains a sense of purpose, satisfaction, dignity and quality of life. With our innovative memory care programming, you can get back to being the daughter, son or spouse your loved one needs in his or her life.

Our Heartfelt Care Philosophy

At the core of everything we do are our guiding principles:

- We believe aging is an entirely natural process.
- We believe in focusing on each resident's unique qualities and abilities.
- We believe in embracing life as it comes and celebrating everything residents do.
- We believe in creating successes, a little bit at a time.

Walnut Place is passionately dedicated to supporting individuals and their loved ones with the unique challenges that come with memory loss. Staff and families freely share information, concerns, ideas and opinions, helping to empower residents and enhance their quality of life.

Give us a call today at (214) 361-8923 to let the Walnut Place expertise and experience help relieve your worries, and keep someone you love safe and content.



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