



EXCELLENCE IN CARING™

HEALTHY AGING INFORMATION

We have all your aging needs covered

Life Planning in Dementia

Caregiving can be overwhelming. Learning how to meet your loved one's needs as dementia progresses, coping with changing relationships and roles, taking care of your own physical and mental health—it's a lot to manage. Amidst these challenges, creating a care plan may be the last thing on your mind, but it's a step every caregiver should take. Unfortunately, the “cross-that-bridge-when-we-come-to-it” mentality can lead to more stress, potential decision-making conflicts (between family members, your loved one, etc.), and can leave you with the pressure of making critical decisions and arrangements under very limited time constraints.

Let's focus on an aspect of care planning that is less-frequently discussed: planning for daily care as dementia progresses. ***Creating a plan for daily care is critical for you and your loved one.*** As care needs change over time, more and more responsibilities are likely to fall on you as the primary caregiver. ***Many caregivers make the commitment out of love or responsibility to provide ALL of the care for their loved one—no questions asked. Although well-meaning, this is a recipe for caregiver burnout.***

Responsibilities often start with tasks like shopping, cooking, cleaning, laundry, managing finances, doctor appointments, transportation, etc. As things progress, the list gets longer and the care tasks become more challenging: supervising, creating reminders, managing medications, dressing, handling behaviors, bathing, mobility, transferring, toileting, feeding, etc.

Even the most competent, caring, fit, and intelligent caregiver would be hard-pressed to go it alone. So, what's the alternative? It starts with a conversation—the earlier the better. Talk with your loved one. Ask him or her about care preferences. Chances are they are most comfortable with you providing care, but maybe they are open to getting some help with some of the responsibilities. Talk about the “are you open to...” and the “what if...” questions. What if you start having trouble with bathing? What if you can no longer get around the house on your own? Are you open to getting some extra help? Many caregivers assume that their loved one would never, ever, EVER, want to live in long-term care, but never actually ask them!

By simply taking the time to talk about these important issues, you will be better informed to create a care plan that fits your loved one's preferences. When the time comes to make decisions about how to provide care, in-home assistance, or long-term care, this knowledge will help guide you to a decision that works for both of you.