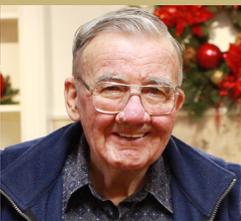


THE CAREGIVER'S *JOURNEY*

Discovering joy and embracing change
while caring for a loved one



Introduction

No child is ever *totally* ready to be a caregiver for their aging mom or dad.

This is a simple statement, but one that captures the difficult reality of *every adult child's* journey as a caregiver. Whether you have spent years thinking about and planning for your eventual caregiving duties or have done everything possible to avoid the thought, nothing can fully prepare you for the moment when you realize that the person who raised you is no longer able to chase monsters from under the bed.

While the journey may be challenging, it is one that can bring great joy, hope, and peace of mind to you, your parent, and your entire family.

Suddenly the person who raised you from birth, who scooped you up when you fell, who kissed your boo-boos, who cut the crust off your sandwiches, and who comforted you when you were feeling down, is no longer able to do the things they used to. Of course, you want to return the kisses and hugs and the care and concern that mom or dad offered so lovingly to you as a child, but you also feel a sense of loss for yourself. The person who walked you down the aisle at your wedding and who took the grandkids to the zoo is no longer able to

walk as far or as quickly anymore. When this moment comes, it hits hard and it hurts. You immediately find yourself immersed in an unfamiliar and challenging, perhaps even scary, situation—you are scrambling for answers.

The desire to avoid this moment is normal for every adult child, especially since it marks a clear sign that you are moving into a journey that you are not ready to undertake and could turn your life upside down. As a result, it is easy—and far too common—to delay planning. You simply are not ready, willing or able to accept the fact that your invincible dad or super mom need you to care for them, to help them make decisions about their future, or perhaps even to make decisions for them.

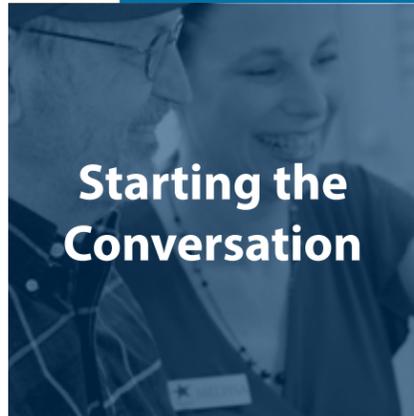
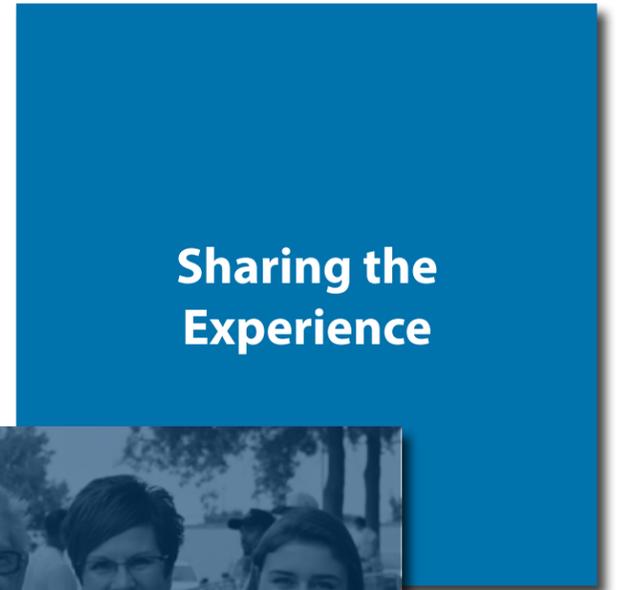
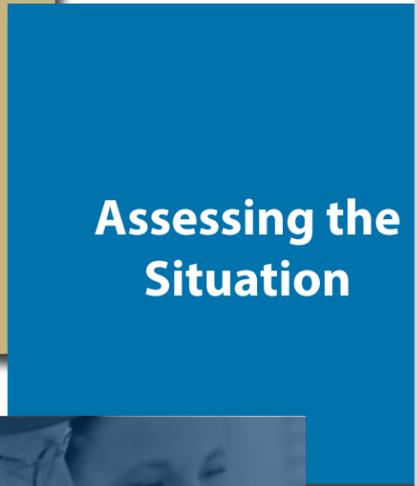
Ideally, the conversation about caregiving begins before a parent's retirement or immediately after the diagnosis of an illness. In reality, this is not often the case. The caregiver's journey is one that can be filled with challenges and crossroads and have unexpected twists and turns that are physically, mentally, and emotionally difficult. Wherever you are in your journey, you can gain some measure of control over the circumstances to help transform your journey into a special, joyful, and gratifying process for everyone involved—especially for your parent.

Creating Joy in Your Journey

This resource is designed to walk you through the various stages of the caregiver's journey so you can prepare your own pathway. This book is designed to be flexible—you can read from cover to cover or go directly to the sections that seem most relevant to you. Wherever you are in your journey, the goal of this resource is to help you discover that, while the journey may be challenging, it is one that can bring great joy, hope, and peace of mind. When you take a moment to stop, reflect, and embrace where you are in the process, you will realize that you are not alone and have the strength to smile as your journey takes place.



Table of Contents



How to use this resource...

-  **Read the full story** of the caregiver's journey from start to finish simply by turning the page to get started.
-  **Click on any of the links above** to learn more about how you can *embrace* a particular stage in your journey.
-  **Navigate to different stages in the journey** at any time by clicking the links at the bottom of each page.



Accepting Stages of Change

Every caregiver is familiar with a version of the following scenario: you and your parent share a beautiful day together where you can set aside life's challenges and revel in the simple joy of each other's company. The next day follows with an event that results in doctor's visits, medication schedules, errands, stress, and frustration. After the tide of this event subsides, you both share another carefree day where you convince yourself to dismiss the events of the previous week and maybe, just maybe, suppress thoughts of next steps and plans for the future for a little while longer. Soon enough, you start to notice other reasons for concern. For example, an increase in memory lapses or bruises from falls. You quickly realize that it's time for denial and thinking to give way to serious planning and action.

If this scenario sounds familiar, it is because *all caregivers experience a journey that is characterized by change.*

The Four Stages of Change

At times the changes you encounter can seem overwhelming. It is essential to understand that change is a natural part of the caregiver's journey and can be embraced for the opportunities, decisions, and life-changing experiences it yields. Throughout the journey there are stages of change that are common to all caregivers: **denial, thinking, planning, and action.** You will notice the presence of these stages throughout this resource and it is likely that you may already be able to identify with one or more of them.

Although these are common stages of change, it is important to recognize that no two family experiences are the same. Everyone has a unique journey. In addition, change is never linear. Navigating these four stages of change often involves taking two steps forward and one step back. You might jump into action before experiencing denial, or you might never encounter denial at all. For many caregivers, planning might not manifest itself in a specific "stage," but is instead present throughout each of the other stages.

Embracing Change

The caregiver's journey is dynamic. It is possible that you might not recognize these stages as they occur. However, you should recognize that they are ever-present and guide your journey. It is natural to progress through these stages and undergo phases of evaluation and re-evaluation. This characterizes the dynamic nature of the caregiver's journey. You might not be aware of what stage you are in or what stage you are moving toward, but if you trust in the process, these stages of change can be a metamorphosis that leads to physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional well-being for both you and your parent.

Denial

Maintaining the comfort of the current situation by suppressing thoughts of next steps and plans for the future.

Thinking

Assessing the current situation, considering outcomes, and understanding the need for further action.

Planning

Acknowledging the gravity of the current situation by exploring solutions and preparing for next steps.

Action

Responding to the current situation by taking the initiative to put thinking and planning into action.

Understanding Early Signs

All journeys have a beginning—a key moment in time that sets events in motion and opens a pathway to what awaits in the future. However, when it comes to the caregiver's journey, the beginning can be difficult to pinpoint; it often emerges slowly from a host of subtle early signs. These early signs can begin long before conversations, or even thoughts, about caregiving take place. As a result, it is not uncommon for caregivers to overlook the reality that their journey has commenced until these early signs become more frequent or pronounced.

For the parent, early signs can manifest in the following*:

- Feelings of loneliness
- Increasing moments of forgetfulness
- Trouble with simple tasks around the house
- Losing track of dates or time
- Decreased judgement
- Increased irritability

In addition, certain events can also be considered as early signs*:

- Retirement
- Death of a parent's spouse
- Milestone birthdays

**These lists are only a small representation of early signs*

Fear, Control, Denial

When a parent is faced with the thought of one day having to depend on his or her children for basic living needs, self-defense and fear may set in. Every jar that refuses to open and every forgotten phone number begins to echo this loss of control, which can lead to increasing moments of anxiety, frustration, and panic. For this reason, it is easy to understand why an aging parent makes the effort to deny or ignore the early signs.

These early signs can also be easy for the adult child caregiver to miss or *dismiss* as signals that indicate the imminent need for caregiving. While denial is a natural initial response, it is important for the caregiver to be conscious of these early signs in order to prepare mentally for the road ahead. Taking a conscientious, compassionate approach to caregiving helps to make understanding early signs and engaging in a thoughtful process of planning and decision-making more beneficial and far less unnerving for both the caregiver and the parent.



Identifying “The Fall”

The Meaning Behind “The Fall”

In the context of the caregiver’s journey, “the fall” needs little description. The fall is an event that almost every caregiver can identify. It is one that shakes you to the core and instantly elicits a jolting reality check. This is the point at which the façade of early signs disappears and the gravity of the situation at hand sets in: it’s time to take your caregiving role into action.

This is the point at which the façade of early signs disappears and the gravity of the situation at hand sets in: it’s time to take your caregiving role into action.

While a physical fall is one of the most common “wake up” calls, there are other crisis events that can have an equally alarming impact. For example, you might make an overdue trip to visit your parent during the holidays, only to discover that they have undergone a dramatic physical transformation due to significant weight loss. Another instance might occur during a family gathering when your parent cannot remember familiar words or names.

These are the moments that cause you to look across the room to your siblings and see the worry you are feeling reflected in their eyes.

Although no major physical harm may result from one of these events, this is the trigger moment in the journey where denial gives way to thinking, acceptance, and action.

We All Fall Down

While a physical or mental fall is often the trigger event that prompts action on the part of *the caregiver*, this event also generates a mental and emotional fall for *the parent*. It is a moment when the loss of control becomes profoundly real for your parent upon recognizing that life is changing and daily activities might not be the same—or as simple—as they once were.

Have you experienced “the fall” during your journey?

Stop for a moment to reflect on this question. If you have experienced such an event you are unlikely to forget about it. A fall is a difficult and emotional event to process. However, it is also an opportunity to gather your family members together with love and support and begin planning ahead for meaningful action.



Experiencing Anxiety

Identifying the Source of Anxiety

As early signs progress to physical or mental falls, family concerns increase. There is an unshakable feeling of genuine worry about the safety and well-being of your loved one.

At this stage, family members become increasingly involved with physical caregiving tasks. These tasks typically begin with volunteered responsibilities such as running errands, providing transportation, and undertaking basic household chores.

While these tasks might appear straightforward and routine and even provide a way to release anxiety, your established role as caregiver can quickly progress to include attending medical appointments, tracking medications, and managing finances.

The very act of assuming these added responsibilities inevitably causes additional stress and anxiety. Although you might not realize it, this cycle indicates that anxiety manifests itself in your caregiving tasks. As a result, the added activities and responsibilities can make it more difficult for both you and your parent to cope with the current situation. When you allow anxiety to drive your everyday actions and planning, it can have a significant impact on your entire family.

How to Approach Anxiety

As you notice anxiety begin to set in, it is critical to remember an important truth: what you are experiencing is normal and is an emotional response born out of your deep love and genuine concern for your parent.

You may have moments when you might not feel your actions are enough or you do not have the strength to face the journey ahead. Rest assured that you are not alone in these thoughts. Every caregiver has experienced feelings of self-doubt. In reality, it is rare for a caregiver *not* to experience anxiety at some point during the journey.

The best thing you can do for yourself and for your parent is to stop, focus, and acknowledge where you are in your journey. Seek the moments of joy that exist amidst your caregiving tasks, such as celebrating good news after a doctor's appointment or having a fun afternoon with the grandkids. Make time for the activities you and your parent love to do together, such as going to movies or bookstores. Appreciate the fact that you are rekindling relationships with family members you might not have communicated with in months or years.

Above all, trust in the process and understand that—with planning, resources, and the support of those around you—*anxiety can give way to the joys of living in the present moment each day.*

Tips for Managing Anxiety

- **Plan for the future, but live in the present. Try not to weigh yourself down with worries and doubts.**
- **Learn what triggers your anxiety and address the causes**
- **Never forget about YOUR well-being! Take care of yourself physically, mentally, and emotionally.**
- **Frequently reach out to others for support (friends, family, online resources, etc.)**
- **Celebrate even the smallest accomplishments**
- **Set short-term and long-term goals for your journey**



Assessing The Situation

The Caregiver's Situation

At this point in the caregiver's journey, you have likely entrenched yourself in your caregiving responsibilities and find it increasingly difficult to shake the feelings of anxiety that arise as your parent's physical or mental condition deteriorates. This is the point when you make an important discovery: *you now define yourself by your caregiving role.*

You might be so absorbed in your caregiving role that it has come to overshadow your more significant role as a son or daughter.

While caring for a parent can be a rewarding experience, it is imperative to pause and evaluate your situation when you reach this point.

The reason? You might be so absorbed in your caregiving role that it has come to overshadow your more significant role as a son or daughter.

Let this statement sink in for a moment. Does it resonate with your own experience?

If so, you might feel as if the simple joys you remember from growing up, when your parent was the caregiver, seem like a distant memory. You might acknowledge the weight of your caregiving role, but feel lost or unwilling in your ability to change this reality.

It is often the most dedicated caregivers who make this realization. However, the positive reassurance to be gained from this experience is that you *can* reaffirm your role as a son or daughter by determining what your abilities and limits are as a caregiver.

While making this determination might seem simple, it can be very difficult to step back and assess the situation, particularly if you have been a caregiver for a long period of time. When this is the case, your greatest resource lies in the guidance of others.

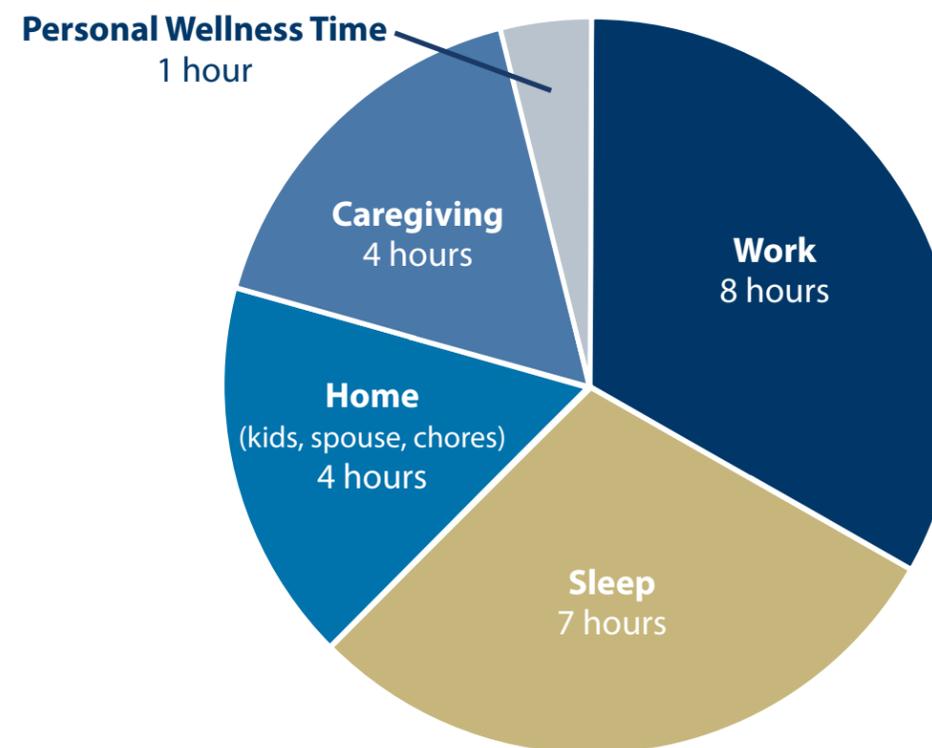
Your Parent's Situation

Assessing your parent's situation begins by consulting with others to determine what your parent needs. Consultation is a holistic approach that encompasses physical, mental, social, spiritual, and financial assessments. Other people can help you to obtain a concrete sense of what you can expect in the way of future caregiving and overall wellness.

Do your parent's determined needs require more than you are physically or emotionally able to give without losing yourself in your caregiving role?

If so, this is the time when you need to have a meaningful conversation about assisted living options with your family members. As you will discover in the following section (Starting the Conversation), your family can be one of your greatest assets when it comes to gathering support and preparing for the journey that lies ahead.

A day in the life of a caregiver



Starting The Conversation

Preparing for the Conversation

Just as “the fall” instantly conveys powerful images of change within the context of the caregiver’s journey, “the conversation” encompasses a world of emotions, implications, and expectations. There is always a point during the journey when you, as the caregiver, need to sit down and talk with your parent about safety, well-being, and future living options. This is one of the most difficult, emotional parts of the journey to prepare for—and for many reasons.

Up to this point you have made every effort to ensure your parent maintains a sense of control and peace of mind while providing the support they need. You have witnessed your parent struggle with the circumstances and loss of control. You now fear that broaching the subject of assisted living might be the act that shatters any remaining grasp of independence and control. You do not want your parent to resent you for trying to take away their independence. You certainly do not want your parent to feel as if they have become a burden and are being abandoned, particularly because you know this is the opposite of your intentions.

Conversation Goals and Expectations

These emotions and fears are normal given the difficult nature of the conversation. Your parent *is* likely to feel a deep sense of loss—loss of independence, control, optimism, and possibly even trust. They might react outwardly with anger or sadness, or withdraw into a state of resignation. The goal of this step in the journey is to empathize with how they feel and start talking about your options together. Your parent *should* have an emotional reaction, yet come to understand that the conversation is born from love, not self-centered intentions. Ultimately, the feelings of loss your parent is bound to experience can give way to hope by turning the conversation about the future into a positive message.

The Family Dynamic

One of the greatest rewards of the conversation and the caregiver’s journey as a whole is the fact that it has the power to bring siblings and other family members together. This is the time parents hope for and derive great joy from. A sibling can quickly become one of your closest allies. This being said, the dynamic of siblings is not always a positive aspect of the journey for every caregiver. It is important that you prepare not only for the conversation with your parent, but also with your siblings. Bringing family members together to align on goals is critical in order to have a positive conversation with your aging parent.

By gathering the family together and having a heartfelt, meaningful conversation, you can express the love and emotions that are the driving force *behind* your words and create a greater sense of joy and peace of mind for everyone involved.

Communication Frequency

It is important to realize that there is rarely a situation where the conversation is a single event. It can take weeks or even months to help a parent (or other family members) understand the reality of the situation and recognize that it is time. It is not practical to force a loved one to accept in-home care, move into assisted living, or even move into your home—the decision must be made by your parent. This is why it is important to take a patient, multi-session approach with conversations grounded in love, sensitivity, and genuine concern for your parent’s well-being.

Tips for the Conversation

- Start the conversation as early in the journey as possible
- Talk often with your parent (and family) about the future
- Ensure you, your siblings, and your other family members are on the same page *prior* to having the conversation with your parent
- Be patient: attempting to force the issue can create a hostile environment
- Continually acknowledge your parent’s autonomy, but encourage action
- Keep it positive, grounded in love, and celebrate progress

Determining Goals

Overcoming Roadblocks

There are times when the caregiver's journey can feel overwhelming. When you consider the number of responsibilities that must be addressed, the scenarios that need to be planned for, and the emotions that accompany every step along the way, the tendency to feel unsure or even lost at times is wholly understandable.

Even the caregivers with the most comprehensive plans often experience multiple roadblocks. You might have a color-coded spreadsheet for errands, arrive 15 minutes early to every doctor's appointment, and have dozens of resources at your fingertips, yet at the end of the week, you find that both you and your parent do not feel a sense of accomplishment or even joy in the wake of your efforts.

This is often due to an important distinction in the caregiver's journey: *determining plans* is entirely different from *determining goals*.



The Goals We Share

Goals are what give purpose to daily actions and planning. A common goal among caregivers is to ensure the well-being, safety, and happiness of their parents while bringing peace of mind to the entire family. This "big picture" goal can also encompass multiple time- or event-specific goals, such as helping Mom discover a new social activity or having the initial conversation about assisted living end on a positive note.

Your family goals serve as the motivational force that drives every decision made throughout the caregiver's journey. This helps to ensure that both you and your parent understand the meaning, care, and love behind these decisions and can celebrate together when these goals are accomplished.

Whether the plan is to assist your parent with transitioning to a senior living community or encourage relocating to a family member's house, the goal is to help your parent discover that this is a place where they can go to live—not a place where they're being sent as a burden.

In determining specific goals for how to assist your parent as they transition to a new living option or lifestyle, it is important to strive for an outcome that will enable *everyone* to live life to its fullest. Whether the plan is to assist your parent with transitioning to a senior living community or encourage relocating to a family member's house, the *goal* is to help your parent discover that this is a place where they can go to *live*—not a place where they're being *sent* as a burden. The future should be seen as a hopeful, positive place to journey toward.

As you begin the process of determining goals, remember that one of the all-encompassing "big picture" goals involves looking back on the journey, seeing what was valuable, and taking joy from the experience you and your parent were able to share together.

Finding The Right Living Option

Helping your parent find the right living option requires research, planning, thinking, feeling, and collaboration. If, after having the conversation about living options, your collaborative goals for the future point toward the transition to a senior living community, there are many considerations that can help to ensure the *best* living option is also the *right* living option for your parent.

Facility vs. Community

As you and your parent begin the search for the right living option, it is likely that you will come across a number of locations that are described as senior living or assisted living facilities. When you consider the word, “facility,” it is not unusual to think of a place that is cold, sterile, and institutional—a description that does not tend to evoke positive feelings when planning for a happy future. The purpose of a facility is to provide the basic space and equipment needed to afford a service. When it comes to senior living options, there are a number of requirements that most *facilities* will meet:

- The parent’s wellness needs (physical, mental, lifestyle)
- Availability of various services and programs
- Convenient location
- Financing options

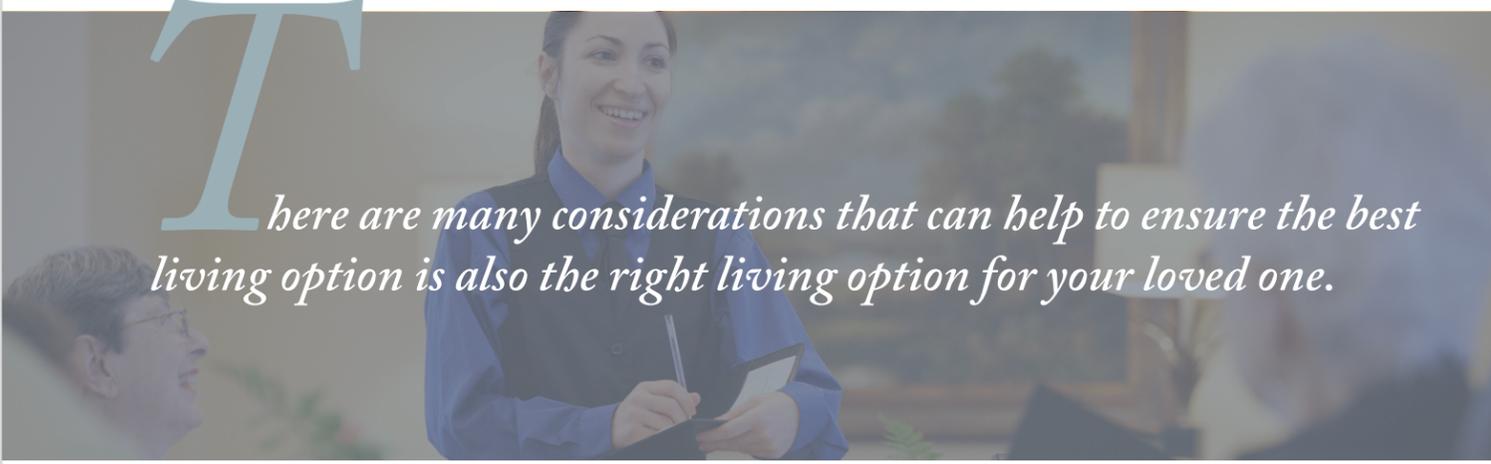
After the basic needs are marked from the checklist, there is a far greater requirement to consider. It is a nuance that cannot be found on paper: **the sense of community.**

Sense of Community Living

Most “senior living facilities” have the same amenities, such as spacious floorplans, engaging wellness programs, professional landscaping, and diverse dining options. However, what distinguishes a *facility* from a true *community* are the personalized details that can only be experienced in person, which is why you must tour any community you are considering. These details are what create emotional connections the moment you and your parent walk through the door of a particular location. The sense of community can take the form of the following:

- Personalized greetings
- Genuine enthusiasm shown by all staff members; associates are like family
- Sense of joy, comfort, and ease visible among current residents
- Positive relationships immediately established with you and your parent
- Feeling an overall sense of home from the moment of arrival
- Feeling confident that your parent will have a sense of purpose

If you are unable to confidently check the above items from your list, this may be an indication that you should continue researching additional living options. Remember, one of the most important goals in the caregiver’s journey is to bring peace of mind to everyone in your family—especially your parent. Address the concerns of your parent and trust your own intuition throughout this process in order to make a decision you can both take confidence in.



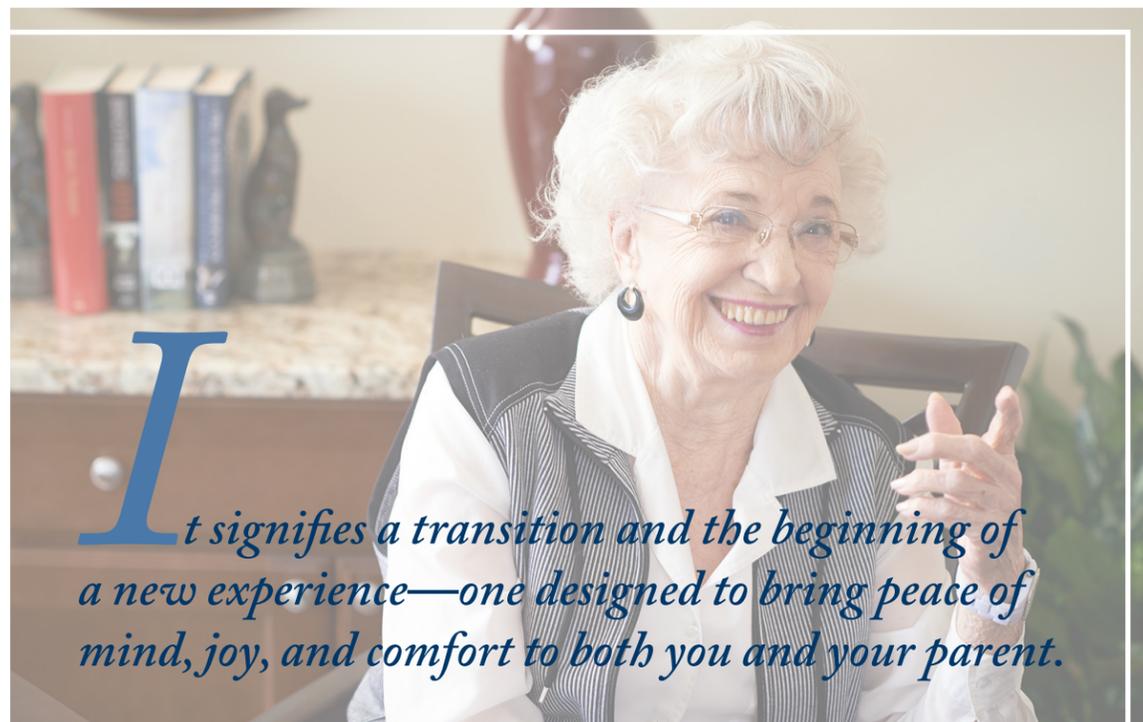
There are many considerations that can help to ensure the best living option is also the right living option for your loved one.

Making The Decision

There is a pinnacle moment in every caregiver's journey.

After evaluating the situation, shifting between feelings of doubt and confidence, having meaningful conversations with family members, determining goals, and researching every possible living option and resource, the moment arrives when you and your parent make a final decision and say, "we're doing this."

It is a moment that encompasses feelings of relief and trepidation and represents the culmination of every physical, mental, and emotional experience encountered throughout the journey. Whether the moment arrives easily or requires a lengthy period of reflection, it signifies a transition and the beginning of a new experience—one designed to bring peace of mind, joy, and comfort to both you and your parent.



Decision Factors

Choosing an independent, assisted, or memory support community is one of the most important decisions of the caregiver's journey and therefore requires a great deal of time, patience, research, and consideration.

Multiple factors contribute to the decision, all of which stem from both practical and emotional needs. For example, while the community you are considering must be a well-established, credible organization, it must also be able to provide you with a sense of well-being and security. Anything less than this might leave you feeling uneasy about the decision you are about to make, which should serve as an indication to stop, listen to your intuition, and re-evaluate. You must feel confident about the decision.

Throughout the decision-making process, it is critical to keep in mind what is most important to both you and your parent. When the moment of decision finally arrives, make it a moment of celebration, not resignation. With every transition in life comes an opportunity for new beginnings—make this an opportunity to create a memory that you and your parent can look back on with joy and gratitude for years to come.

Important Questions

- You may have found the *best* place for your parent, but is it the *right* place?
- Do you feel at ease with the decision you are making? If not, what is causing you to feel anxious?
- Is your parent happy or upset with the decision? Why?
- Do safety and security features bring you peace of mind?
- Do staff members and residents make the community feel welcoming?
- Will you be able to look back on this decision with joy or will you experience regret?

Making The Move

The caregiver's journey is filled with emotional peaks and valleys. While some stages can feel like a constant uphill climb (The Conversation), others serve as plateaus that open the path to periods of immense joy and relative ease (Assessing the Situation, Determining Goals). Within this pattern, there is a common assumption that making the decision to move is a climax event—one that causes the events that follow to appear relatively straightforward and easy. If you and your parent have made the decision to move, stop and take a moment to congratulate yourself—committing to a move or a significant life change is one of the hardest parts of the journey. Also recognize that making the

move from a parent's home to an assisted living community is a physical and emotional challenge that requires patience, commitment, and empathy in order to achieve positive results.

Acting with Empathy

One of the greatest mental challenges faced by aging parents is coming to terms with leaving a home. For many parents, the house in which they currently live is the place where children were raised, grandchildren visited, and lasting memories were made. It is a place that holds powerful emotional significance and represents a lasting legacy for the entire family—including the caregiver. The home a parent spent years

building is likely also the caregiver's childhood home—a place filled with memories and relics that might also be very difficult for the caregiver to part with.

Making the move from a parent's home to an assisted living community is a physical and emotional challenge that requires patience, commitment, and empathy in order to achieve positive results.

For this reason, it can be overwhelming for a parent to be tasked with packing decades' worth of memories and moving from a place of comfort and security to a place that is wholly unfamiliar. It is critical to empathize with your parent's situation and move ahead at a comfortable pace that provides your parent the time needed to physically and emotionally process this important life event.

To make this process easier, find moments where you can pause and relive happy memories with your parent. Stop packing and look through photo albums, laugh together when you come across a box of childhood clothing, and talk about the ways that you will be able to create new memories both during and after the move. This helps to create a positive experience from a difficult situation.

Seeking Moving Resources

As you and your parent begin the process of making the move, it is important to remember that—as with other stages in the caregiver's journey—you are not alone. An invaluable resource you can rely upon during the transition is the assisted living community you and your parent have chosen. Ideal assisted living communities will always provide assistance to you and your parent throughout the moving process—a distinguishing factor that it is important to confirm during your initial research of living options. Move-in coordinators are a valuable asset, as they make a potentially stressful experience manageable and help to ensure that your parent is able to embrace life once the move is complete.

It is important to remember that—as with other stages in the caregiver's journey—you are not alone.

Embracing Senior Living

You have arrived.

The move is complete and all of the decisions you and your parent have made together have culminated in the beginning of a new life experience. While you can now embrace the peace of mind this new situation affords, it is important to remember that your caregiving duties have not ended. In fact, this is the point at which one of the most important stages in your caregiving journey begins. It is time to ensure that your parent has the continued love and support they need to feel at home in a new living community.

The immediate days and weeks following the move is the critical time when you and your parent determine if the assisted living experience aligns with what you were promised during your site visits. This is a process that will largely be driven by your parent as they acclimate to new activities and programs, changes in routines, and community life. However, as a caregiver, it is essential to follow up and have frequent, meaningful conversations to ensure your parent is participating in activities and interacting comfortably with other members of the staff and community.

Following Up with Staff

This is the point at which the care, experience, and trustworthiness of all assisted living staff members should shine. Good associates will help your parent with the physical transition to assisted living, while truly exceptional associates will also guide your parent through the process of finding emotional comfort in new surroundings. This can involve helping your parent embrace community life by encouraging participation in programs such as Zumba, Laughter Yoga, Dakim® BrainFitness, or other activities that cater to your parent's lifestyle and interests. However, it is the small acts—greeting your parent by name in the hallway or introducing new residents at lunch—that can help your parent realize that life truly can be wonderful and significantly easier as a result of the life-changing decision to move to an assisted living community.

Finding Time to Reflect

As your parent moves closer to this realization, it is time for *YOU* to start embracing your new life. As you become familiar with your parent's new routines and witness positive life changes, recognize the positive outcomes in your own life and reflect upon the journey that has brought you to this point.

Compare the list of tasks you addressed as your parent's primary caregiver with the list of tasks you complete now.

Instead of tracking medications, cleaning the house, and running errands, your primary task might be checking to see if your parent went to poetry class on Tuesday. It is a dramatic, uplifting difference—one that will enable you to focus on the chance to embrace the simple joy of being your parent's son or daughter once again.

Tasks of a Primary Caregiver

- Monitor medications
- Housekeeping chores and home maintenance
- Prepare meals
- Provide transportation
- Develop a care plan
- Assist with personal care
- Monitor finances
- Schedule medical appointments
- Help encourage social interactions with others

Tasks of an Adult Child

- Get to know community staff and neighbors
- Check with Mom to see if she went to her Zumba class
- Attend the community Family Night
- Schedule class with the computer tutor

Sharing The Experience

An important step in the caregiver's journey is one that is often overlooked: sharing the experience with others. If you are reading these words after exploring the stages in this resource, you are fully aware of how complex the caregiver's journey can be. While the journey has the potential for great joy, it is certainly not without its challenges—one of the most significant being learning how to cope with feeling overwhelmed. When these challenges arise, it is important to remember that there are countless others who have shared a similar experience and have powerful stories to share. Take inspiration from these stories and know that one day, when you are able to reflect meaningfully upon your journey, your own story will have the potential to serve as a resource and a source of inspiration for others.

Does the caregiver's journey have an ending?

Almost every caregiver who considers this question will answer with a resounding "no." This is due to the fact that, even long after your parent is settled into a new life with new caregivers in a new community, you *never* stop providing care, love, and support to your parent. Being a caregiver is far more than running errands and preparing meals—it is about being present and being a source of comfort at a time in life when your parent needs to know that you will always be there...just as they were there when you needed them, once upon a time.



Being a caregiver is far more than running errands and preparing meals—it is about being present and being a source of comfort at a time in life when your parent needs to know that you will always be there...just as they were there when you needed them, once upon a time.