

Transitioning to long term care

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One of the hardest decisions you as family or friend caregivers will have to make is whether your loved one needs to move to a 24-hour care facility.

This change can be an emotional rollercoaster, as you come to the realization that you are no longer able to give them the care they need. But still, you will inevitably wonder, “is this really the right decision?” You may have said “I will never put mom or dad in a nursing home”, but the day may come that their health needs have become too complicated for you and other members of the family to handle.

Just remember one thing: you are not doing it “to them” but “for them”.

When making the decision whether the time has come that your loved one now needs the level and degree of support that can only be provided in long term care, some of the things that should be considered are found on our website and include:

- **Changes in behaviour** - Are they more irritable than usual, or more angry, sad, or withdrawn? Maybe they're a little more confused and forgetting or repeating conversations or medications?
- **Safety concerns** - Are they starting to wander or are they falling more frequently? Are you concerned with them using the stove or has their driving become a concern? Have they lost weight due to poor eating habits?
- **Activities of daily living** - Is getting out of bed or just walking becoming a chore for them? Are they having problems preparing meals, bathing, and dressing? Is the home unkempt and cluttered?
- **Financial Concerns** - Are bills unopened and letters piling up? Are there thank-you notes from charities for recent donations?

As well as all of the above, perhaps they have developed health issues that are just too complicated for the family to handle and will need 24 hour monitoring. The family may not have the knowledge or ability to deal with these problems. And if someone has to stay with them, can the family just drop everything to come to their assistance?

Just remember when making the decision, include everyone in the conversation. Do your homework as to which facility would be the best for your loved one; you can tour the different facilities and see what each has to offer. Take into consideration your loved one's personality and what is most important to them, so they will enjoy being there.

Having worked in a LTC facility for close to 25 years, I can say from experience that I have seen good and bad transitions into care but, overall, the majority have been good. Often the quality of the relationship has actually improved for the family, as they can enjoy the visit, instead of worrying about all the caregiving duties that they were responsible to handle.

Also, as family members who care deeply about your loved one, you will have the peace of mind that they are getting the best care possible.

If you've ever wondered ...

- *How do I plan for future healthcare when I am not sure what my needs will be?*
- *What qualities do I look for in a substitute decision maker?*
- *What are the main values and beliefs that shape my quality of life?*

... our workshop on **Advance Care Planning: Getting Started** can help.
Learn more by calling 1-877-488-7390.