



Assisted Living and Older Adults: *When It's Time for Help*



Today, people are living longer than ever and while this is certainly good news, this longer life span also means the majority of seniors will require some form of long-term care. And if you do not properly plan, some situations can get pretty complicated. This is especially true if your parents have yet to start planning for long-term care.

This can be a stressful time. But don't worry, help is just around the corner when you consider Assisted Living at a Continuing Care Retirement Community. The important thing is to keep in mind that identifying your parents' needs is the first step in supporting their individuality and maintaining their independence.

When is the Time Right to Consider Assisted Living?

There are two reasons you may experience an increased need for support:

- Your parents are no longer able to care for themselves safely.
- You are experiencing caregiver burnout.



Signs Your Parents Are No Longer Able to Safely Care for Themselves

Making a decision about how to care for other people, especially your parents, is one of the hardest decisions you will ever make. Of course, you want to ensure the care of people you love, but not sooner than they may need it. Life is busy and there comes a time when extra help is necessary. It can be hard to watch your parents struggle and feeling shame or guilt about not being able to help is common.

Understandably, most older adults want to stay in their homes. So, what are some indicators that your parents may benefit from the support of Assisted Living?

They're Constantly Exhausted

Everyone has days when they're tired, however persistent exhaustion is an indicator that something else might be going on. There is a long list of medical conditions strongly linked to fatigue:

- Fibromyalgia
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Heart Disease
- Kidney Disease
- Thyroid Disease
- And More...

There are also mental health challenges that arise more commonly as we age:

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Grief
- Stress
- And More...

Constant exhaustion caused by any of the above mentioned conditions, while a problem in and of itself, can lead to increased risk for other concerns such as falling, confusion, and loss of appetite.



Signs Your Parents Are No Longer Able to Safely Care for Themselves

Continued...

They Are Trying to Hide Their Problems

Perhaps they forgot their medication or missed a doctor's appointment. While these little mistakes can happen to anyone, when they happen repeatedly and your parent doesn't tell you (or denies them), this can be an indicator of memory issues. If they become defensive when confronted, this may indicate that they understand that there is a problem but feel ashamed or are worried about admitting it.

They Get Lost Going to Familiar Places

When older adults get lost going to a friend's house they've known for ages or the grocery store, this is cause for concern. While some cognitive abilities may decline with age, frequently getting lost could signify dementia, Alzheimer's or other health complications.

They Are Having Trouble Taking Care of Themselves

If your parent's hygiene is slipping, it could mean they don't have the energy to bathe anymore. Or, they may feel unsafe and fear they might fall in the shower. Whatever the reason, a change in the way they are caring for themselves could indicate a change in their mental or physical health.

Similarly, if their clothes are no longer clean or they gain/lose a substantial amount of weight, this could also indicate a significant change in the way they are living.

They Aren't As Mobile As They Once Were

If your parent is suddenly spending a lot of time in bed or on the couch when they were once active, it could be illness or fear keeping them there. They may become afraid of moving around too much for fear of falling or slipping. Should you notice your parent is hobbling or taking smaller steps, it's worth paying attention to their movements.



Signs Your Parents Are No Longer Able to Safely Care for Themselves

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The House and Yard Aren't Being Taken Care Of

While few enjoy cleaning, it is often something we do sooner or later. However, if you go to your parent's house and see more than a month's worth of clutter, dust, or dishes piling up, it may indicate they are having a hard time with the upkeep. Likewise, if the yard is looking unkempt and disorganized it might be a sign that your parent is having trouble taking care of it. If your parent can't take care of their home and yard, it might be time for help.

They've Become Isolated

If your parent used to socialize regularly and have stopped doing so, they may be suffering from isolation. Depressed individuals often demonstrate a lack of enthusiasm for the things they used to enjoy and poor physical health is often the culprit with older adults.

Caregiver Burnout

According to psychologists, caregiver burnout is a state of physical, emotional, and mental exhaustion caused by caring for another person. Dealing with multiple prolonged and highly stressful issues can lead to hopelessness, depression, exhaustion, and resentment. This occurs when caregivers don't get the help they need, or if they try to do more than they are capable of (physically or financially).

If you are approaching caregiver burnout, or think you are already experiencing it, now is the time to get the help you need. Some signs of caregiver burnout are:

- Anxiety
- Guilt
- Grief/Loss
- Loneliness
- Exhaustion



Benefits of Assisted Living

Though it can be hard thinking about your parent needing assistance, there are many benefits of assisted living. The benefits are both tangible and intangible.

Tangible Benefits of Assisted Living

The tangible benefits of assisted living are those that you can see and often involve the physical care of your parent.

Support

One of the most common reasons you might be looking into assisted living for your parent is because they need assistance with daily activities. These activities may include:

- Bathing
- Dressing
- Making Meals
- Home Maintenance

With less time spent on tasks like self-care, your parent can spend time pursuing their own interests. Your parent may also receive assistance with managing their medications and general health monitoring.

Events and Services

There will be a variety of experiences to accommodate your parent's needs. With a robust calendar and skilled professionals dedicated to their wellness, residents are empowered to grow mentally, physically, and spiritually. They will enjoy reconnecting with an old hobby or relish in the thrill of learning something new. These social events enrich the lives of all residents at Life Enriching Communities.



Benefits of Assisted Living

Continued...

Intangible Benefits of Assisted Living

The intangible benefits of assisted living are those that you might not physically see but still experience.

Convenience

An assisted living environment provides your parent with a simplified lifestyle and great freedom from home maintenance. Services may include:

- Laundry and Housekeeping
- Transportation Services and Shopping Shuttles
- Day Trips
- Salon Services
- Spaces for Hosting Private Events
- Exercise Classes
- Aquatic Area
- Fitness Room
- Daily Events and Programs

Reduces Stress Between You and Your Family

When you and your parent decide together that assisted living is the best option, this reduces your stress of being a caregiver. With assisted living, you will be able to rest easy knowing your parent is receiving the best care.

Taking on the role of a caregiver can mean a departure from the role of a son or daughter. This can lead to feelings of shame, embarrassment, and even resentment. While it's not uncommon for a role reversal of this nature to occur at some point, it doesn't lessen the blow of losing the relationship you once had. One of the greatest gifts you can give yourself is a plan to prevent this change in your relationship.

Prolonged Independence

With more help at their disposal, your parent will have more time to spend on the things they enjoy in a safe environment.



Who is Assisted Living Ideal For?

One of the most difficult aspects of making a decision about assisted living is determining if it is the right move. To help you decide, here is a list of care recipients that could benefit from assisted living.

Seniors with Long-Term Health Issues

Seniors with long-term health issues or other pressing health concerns are very stressful for assisted living. This way they can receive the care and health monitoring they need.

Independent Seniors Who Want to Stay Active

Seniors who want to stay active but need a little support with things like transportation and daily chores are ideal for assisted living. This way they can maintain their independent lifestyle without burdening their family or friends with their care needs.

Social Seniors

Assisted living is great for social seniors. This type of environment gives seniors the opportunity to dine with others, pursue their interests, and participate in on and off-campus events.

The Planners

If your parent is one to plan, assisted living might be a perfect solution to the future plan obstacle. It is always beneficial to have a plan in place for their future care.

Anxious Seniors

Some seniors are more anxious about their care than others. Fortunately, having a care team at their disposal to communicate and collaborate with can help assuage those fears.



How to Start the Conversation About Assisted Living

As we get older, the chances of having a conversation with our parent or parents about care go up exponentially. Learning how to have the conversations beforehand will be monumentally beneficial when it comes time to talk about long-term care. Addressing these issues can be difficult but it is needed to reach a mutually beneficial understanding with the senior in your life.

Have a Goal

Knowing what you want to get out of the conversation ahead of time is key to having a successful talk. The goal of this conversation should be to introduce the idea of assisted living, expressing interest in researching options, and discussing the benefits. Like any other major life decision, it is likely that this will take place over the course of multiple conversations before reaching the decision-making stage.

Set a Time for Action

Don't catch anyone off guard. Set a time to have this conversation and let your parent or parents know what you want to talk about. Be honest about the reason for the conversation.

Lead with Benefits

Don't lead with the challenges of making the change as that is more likely to stress everyone out. Instead, lead with the tangible and intangible benefits we mentioned earlier.

Prepare Yourself

It takes delicate maneuvering to have tough conversations with your parent about their care needs. However, by keeping yourself grounded and present, you can get down to the topics that matter to everyone. Though you have no control over their reaction, you can control how you choose to engage.

The first step in having a difficult talk is making sure you're mentally and emotionally prepared. Do a little preparation to determine what you want to talk about beforehand and how you want to address each issue. If you are having an assisted living conversation, then you will want to go over your safety concerns for your parent.

Try focusing on opening phrases like:

- I'd like to talk to you about x, y, and z.
- It's really time we talk about x, y, and z.
- I've really been thinking about x, y, and z.



Next Step

Now that you've started the conversation, you will need to develop a plan of action in order to follow through with the decisions made.

Make a List of Wants and Needs for Assisted Living

Some wants and needs may include:

- Outdoor spaces
- Pet friendly
- Medication management
- Laundry services
- On-site dining
- Continence care
- And more...

Research Local Options

The next natural step in the process is to start looking at your local options in order to determine where your parent would like to go. Visit websites, request information, and look at floor plans

Arrange a Tour

When you tour, be sure to take your checklist with you so that you can review together afterward.

Are You Ready?

Counseling can be very helpful when making big decisions. This is not only a good idea when any financial planning is needed but also vital to plan for emotional needs. Whether it's a trusted counselor or clergy, having someone who is willing to help support you mentally, emotionally, and spiritually is good practice.

Now that you've learned what you need to know about getting your parent help, it's time to contact a professional.

Ready for the Next Step?

Check out our other resources at <https://lec.org/resources/> to help you and your family age well.



Life Enriching Communities owns and operates six senior living communities (CCRCs)...

CINCINNATI AREA

- Twin Towers, College Hill: 513-853-2000
- Twin Lakes, Montgomery: 513-247-1300

CLEVELAND AREA

- Concord Reserve, Westlake: 440-961-3700

COLUMBUS AREA

- Wesley Glen, Columbus: 614-888-7492
- Wesley Ridge, Reynoldsburg: 614-759-0023
- Wesley Woods, New Albany: 614-656-4100
- Wesley Hospice: 614-451-6700

For additional resources you can visit us online at: www.lec.org

Confident Living is a continuing care at home program offered by Life Enriching Communities (LEC) designed to help people navigate their options so they can live independently in their own homes.

- 513-719-3522



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