

The Caregiver's Journey®

Finally! Practical Tips and Candid Conversations
for Alzheimer's and Dementia Family Caregivers

Partnering With Professionals in Care

A Guide for Dementia Family Caregivers

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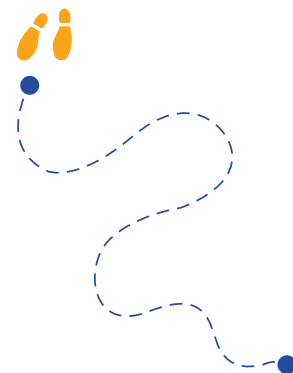
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This guide brings our years of experience in a variety of family caregiving roles. We are sharing our personal experiences, not medical advice, to help prepare you to navigate your caregiving journey.

Introduction: The Journey of Care Partnerships



If you're reading this guide, you're likely navigating the complex journey of caring for someone with dementia. Whether you're considering changing your loved one's living situation, bringing in outside help, or working with a care community, one thing remains constant: the importance of building strong care partnerships.

Throughout the dementia journey, your role will evolve. You may transition from being the primary caregiver to partnering with professional caregivers or care communities. These transitions can be challenging but with proper preparation and the right approach, you can navigate this path with confidence and compassion.

It's normal to feel overwhelmed or uncertain when facing these decisions. This guide aims to provide practical advice drawn from real experiences, helpful strategies that have worked for others, and reassurance that you are more capable than you might currently feel.

We're all on this journey together.

Is It Time to Change Your Care Receiver's Living Situation?

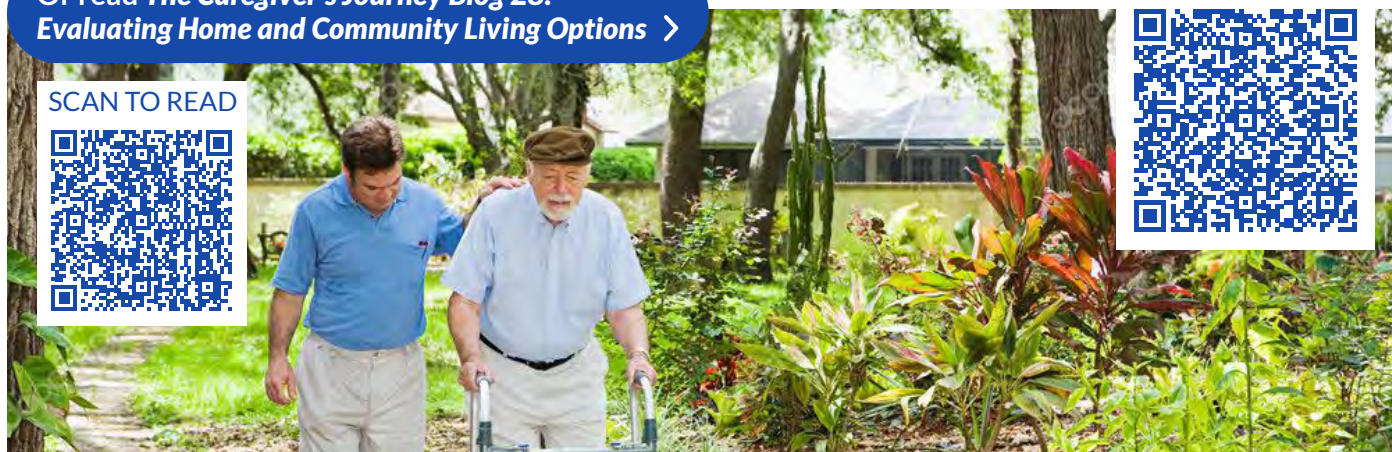
Watch **The Caregiver's Journey Podcast Episode 28: Evaluating Home and Community Living Options** >

Or read **The Caregiver's Journey Blog 28: Evaluating Home and Community Living Options** >

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While we won't explore this topic in depth here, we want to point you to additional resources. If you're reading this guide, you may already be considering your loved one's care options. Should you decide that a care community is the right choice, the latter part of this guide will help you build strong partnerships with care staff.

Let's get started with Partnering With Professionals in Care.

Finding, Hiring, and Working with Paid Caregivers

Watch *The Caregiver's Journey Podcast Episode 32: Navigating the Caregiver Hiring Process*



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Assessing Your Loved One's Needs

Before hiring a caregiver, thoroughly understand what kind of support your loved one needs. This assessment will guide the type of caregiver you hire and the schedule you establish.

Activities of Daily Living (ADLs):

- Evaluate their ability to dress, bathe, and feed themselves
- Assess mobility needs: sitting, standing, moving through the house
- Determine if they need help going to the bathroom

Medical Needs:

- Consider medication management requirements
- Evaluate wound care or specialized health monitoring needs
- Assess needs for medical equipment assistance

Household Management:

- Determine needs for laundry, housekeeping, and meal preparation
- Assess ability to manage household controls (lights, thermostat, etc.)
- Consider shopping and errands assistance

Safety Concerns:

- Evaluate their safety when home alone
- Assess memory issues that could create hazards (stove left on, etc.)
- Consider fall risk and prevention needs

Transportation and Mobility:

- Determine if they can still drive safely
- Assess need for transportation to appointments, shopping, activities
- Evaluate mobility stability outside the home



Companionship:

- Explore social isolation concerns
- Assess need for engagement and activities
- Evaluate emotional support requirements

Safety Deal Breakers: Four key safety indicators that signal someone shouldn't live alone:

- Can they contact help in an emergency?
- Can they take their own medication properly?
- Can they prepare meals and stay hydrated?
- Do you feel they're safe at home alone?

Determining the Type and Frequency of Care

Based on your assessment, determine what type of caregiver would best meet your loved one's needs and how often they'll need assistance.

Types of Caregivers:

Companion Care:

- Provides social companionship
- Assists with light housekeeping
- Helps with meal preparation
- May provide transportation
- Generally no specialized training



Nancy explains: "A companion might come in just to be a social companion. They might do light housekeeping, meal preparation, maybe transportation. But they're not trained like the second kind of caregiver, which is a CNA, certified nursing assistant."

Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA):

- Certified with special training
- Assists with ADLs (bathing, dressing, incontinence)
- Helps with mobility
- Provides companion services as well
- Higher level of training than companions



Skilled Nursing:

- Provides specialized medical care
- Manages wound care, catheters, etc.
- Monitors medical conditions
- Highest level of training and cost

Care Receiver Preferences:

- Consider their preferences for caregiver gender, age, or culture
- Understand that while preferences are important, availability may be limited
- Be prepared to be flexible as finding the perfect match can be challenging

Frequency Considerations:

- Determine how many hours per day are needed
- Decide how many days per week care is required
- Consider whether overnight care might be necessary
- Understand that most caregivers prefer longer, more consistent hours
- Be aware that many agencies have minimum hour requirements (often 4 hours)

Family Involvement:

- Assess what family members can realistically contribute
- Be honest about family capabilities and boundaries
- Consider how paid care can complement family care
- Understand some family members may not be comfortable with certain tasks

Future Planning:

- Anticipate how care needs will likely increase over time
- Consider how frequency might need to change
- Think about the sustainability of your care plan
- Remember that dementia care is “a marathon, not a sprint”

Understanding Your Financial Resources

Before actively seeking paid caregiving support, get a clear picture of what you can afford and what resources are available to help.

Review Financial Accounts:

- Assess savings and investments
- Review retirement accounts
- Evaluate any long-term care insurance policies your loved might have
- Consider potential home equity options
- Look at current income sources



Explore Benefit Programs:

- Investigate Medicare coverage for home health (limited but important)
- Explore Medicaid eligibility and services
- Research veterans benefits if applicable
- Look into state and local programs for seniors
- Consider tax benefits for dependent care

Family Financial Contributions:

- Have open conversations about family financial support
- Consider how family members who can't provide physical care might contribute financially
- Discuss how costs might be shared fairly

Current vs. Future Costs:

- Keep in mind costs will likely increase as care needs grow
- Plan for the progressive nature of dementia
- Budget with flexibility for increasing needs
- Consider potential transition to community care costs

Cost Management Strategies:

- Research agencies with different price points
- Consider a mix of agency and private caregivers
- Explore creative scheduling to maximize coverage while minimizing costs
- Look into respite care programs that might be subsidized
- Investigate adult day programs as cost-effective alternatives for part of the day

Agency vs. Private Hire: Making the Right Choices

Deciding whether to hire through an agency or privately is a significant choice with advantages and disadvantages to both approaches.

Agency Advantages:

- Background checks handled for you
- Payroll, taxes, and insurance managed by the agency
- Backup caregivers provided when your regular caregiver is sick or unavailable
- Specialized training provided to caregivers
- Supervision and quality control
- Reduced liability concerns

Agency Disadvantages:

- Generally more expensive (potentially \$10/hour more than private hire)
- Typically have minimum hour requirements (often 4 hours)
- Less control over exactly who is assigned to your loved one
- Quality and training can vary significantly between agencies
- Price doesn't always correlate with quality of care

Nancy warns about assumptions: "I've used multiple agencies and you can't assume that the training is the same across agencies or that the most expensive agencies have the best training. With one agency that we used it was clear to me that their caregivers were much less trained than another agency we used. When we needed to go to 24/7 care, the agency that had less trained caregivers actually cost more than the other agency did. So just keep in mind, you've got to do your homework and ask all the right questions in order to figure out what's being offered."

Private Hire Advantages:

- Typically less expensive
- Complete control over who cares for your loved one
- Potentially more flexibility with scheduling
- May find caregivers through trusted recommendations

Private Hire Disadvantages:

- You become the employer with all associated responsibilities
- You must handle payroll, taxes, and insurance
- You are responsible for backup when the caregiver is sick or unavailable
- You're responsible for training
- Potential liability concerns
- More difficult to replace if the relationship doesn't work out

Considering a Mixed Approach:

- Some needs covered by agency caregivers
- Other needs handled by private caregivers
- Special situations (like VA benefits) might dictate one approach for certain hours
- Agency for complex care, private for companionship

Questions to Consider:

- How comfortable are you with employer responsibilities?
- How important is having guaranteed backup care?
- What can your budget accommodate?
- Do you have reliable recommendations for private caregivers?

Conducting Effective Interviews

Whether hiring through an agency or privately, asking the right questions will help ensure you find the best caregiver for your situation.

Scheduling Questions:

- What hours and days are they available?
- What is their minimum hour requirement?
- How do they handle schedule changes?
- How do they handle emergencies?

Experience and Training:

- What is their experience with dementia specifically?
- What specialized training have they received?
- How long have they been providing care?
- What types of clients have they handled before?
- Ask for specific examples of if/how they've handled challenging behaviors



Approach to Care:

- How do they handle resistance from care receivers?
- What is their philosophy on providing care?
- How do they balance safety with independence?
- How would they handle specific situations relevant to your loved one?

Communication Style:

- How do they prefer to communicate with family members?
- How do they handle reporting on daily activities?
- What would they do if they observed a concerning change?
- How do they communicate with someone who has dementia?
- How do they handle conflict or disagreement?

Background Verification:

- For agency hires: Ask about their specific screening process
- For private hires: Conduct background checks (typically around \$50 online)
- Check references thoroughly (ask for at least three)
- Ask references about both strengths AND weaknesses
- Verify certifications and training

Trial Period Approach:

- Set clear expectations about a trial period
- For agency hires, this is implied (you can request a different caregiver)
- For private hires, be explicit about the trial nature of the initial period
- This makes potential termination less awkward if needed
- Be prepared that the first caregiver may not be the right fit

Including Your Care Receiver:

- If appropriate, include your loved one in the final interview
- Observe interactions between the potential caregiver and your loved one
- Notice non-verbal cues from both parties
- Trust your instincts about chemistry and compatibility
- Keep in mind that care receiver resistance in the beginning is not unusual

Introducing and Integrating Outside Caregivers

Watch *The Caregiver's Journey Podcast Episode 34: Introduce and Integrate a Caregiver*



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Creating a Welcoming Environment

When bringing a new caregiver into your home or care community, creating a welcoming environment helps establish a positive relationship from the start.

For Home Care:

Give a Thorough Orientation:

- Provide a brief tour of your home
- Show where essential supplies are kept
- Explain how household appliances work
- Demonstrate any special equipment
- Show them where to find emergency information

Ensure Basic Comforts:

- Provide access to drinking water
- Create a designated space for their personal belongings
- Ensure bathroom access
- Consider their comfort needs during long shifts

Personalize Their Welcome:

- Consider creating a small welcome basket
- Provide Wi-Fi access if possible
- Ask about any accommodations they might need
- Show genuine interest in making them comfortable



For Care Communities:

Facilitate Team Integration:

- Introduce them to the leadership team
- Help them meet peer caregivers
- Show your support for them to other staff
- Encourage open dialogue between all parties
- Position them as an important team member

Orient Them to the Community:

- Show them around the community
- Explain community routines and schedules
- Point out important locations and resources
- Introduce them to key staff members
- Help them understand community policies



Demonstrate Your Support:

- Make it clear to all staff that you support this caregiver
- Address any concerns privately, not in front of others
- Advocate for their inclusion in care planning

Introducing the New Caregiver to Your Care Receiver

The initial introduction between caregiver and care receiver sets the tone for their relationship. Thoughtful planning can make this transition smoother for everyone.

Timing and Setting:

- Schedule the first visit during your care receiver's best time of day
- Choose a time when they're typically most receptive
- Select a familiar, comfortable environment
- Minimize distractions and potential stressors
- Allow plenty of time without rushing

Begin with Pleasant Activities:

- Start with an activity your loved one enjoys
- Choose something familiar and comfortable
- Consider a shared meal, looking at photos, or listening to favorite music
- Select activities that allow natural conversation
- Create a relaxed atmosphere for getting acquainted

For Home-Based Reluctance:

- Frame the caregiver's presence as help for you, not them
- Use language like "Sarah is helping me with some things around the house"
- Have the caregiver start with household tasks rather than direct care
- Gradually introduce personal care as comfort builds
- Be honest but selective about what information you share

Nancy shares her experience: "When I brought a new caregiver into our home for at least the first couple of weeks my husband would tell her 'You need to go home'. She would smile and say, 'Well, I'm not going home just yet.' She recently started caregiving for someone new, and she told me the exact same thing is happening. So realize this is a process."

Gradual Integration:

- Begin with simple, non-personal tasks
- Invite the caregiver to join you on errands or appointments
- Slowly introduce them to the care routine
- Allow relationships to develop naturally without forcing

Managing Resistance:

- Accept some initial resistance as normal
- Remain calm and positive despite protests
- Continue with the plan while acknowledging feelings
- Avoid lengthy explanations or arguments
- Keep in mind that persistence and consistency usually work

Remote Introductions:

- If you can't be present, arrange a video call to introduce the caregiver
- Ask a trusted friend or family member to be present if possible
- Check in shortly after the visit to get feedback from both parties
- Be available by phone for questions or concerns

Educating the Caregiver about Your Loved One

Sharing information about your loved one helps the caregiver provide personalized, appropriate care from the beginning.

Create a Care Plan:

- Keep a dedicated notebook or leverage technology to store essential information
- Include emergency contacts, medication lists, and doctor information
- Document preferences, routines, and strategies that work
- Note triggers and things to avoid
- Make sure it's easy to access

Watch *The Caregiver's Journey Podcast Episode 33: How To Create a Care Plan*



Or read *The Caregiver's Journey Blog 33: How To Create a Care Plan* >

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Share the Care Plan:

- Go through the care plan with the new caregiver
- Focus on immediate responsibilities first
- Show them where to find the complete care plan
- Gradually introduce additional elements over time
- Update the plan together as you learn what works

Sue describes her approach: “My goal was to be completely prepared for emergencies when someone else might need to step in and care for Jack. I wanted them to have everything they’d need to provide the same level of care he was used to. There was always an updated notebook on the kitchen counter with Jack’s complete care plan - full of helpful tips and important details.”

Share Personal History:

- Tell them about your loved one’s background
- Discuss their career, hobbies, and interests
- Show photos and share stories
- Highlight achievements and important life events
- Help the caregiver see the whole person, not just their current condition

Discuss Preferences and Routines:

- Explain daily routines in detail
- Note food preferences and dietary needs
- Describe typical sleep patterns
- Share hygiene preferences and routines
- Identify favorite activities and pastimes

Communicate Effective Approaches:

- Share what communication styles work best
- Explain how to redirect during difficult moments
- Describe successful strategies for resistance
- Discuss how to handle common challenges
- Demonstrate techniques that have worked for you

Invite Their Insights:

- Recognize their professional experience
- Ask for their observations
- Be open to new approaches they suggest
- Value their perspective and input
- Create a collaborative learning environment



Building Trust Gradually

Trust develops over time and requires intentional effort from all parties. Taking a gradual approach helps establish a solid foundation.

Honor Established Routines:

- Ask caregivers to follow your loved one's routine initially
- Explain that consistency is reassuring for someone with dementia
- Acknowledge that the caregiver may have better ways of doing things
- Express openness to gradual changes once trust is established
- Appreciate their patience with existing systems

Nancy shares a personal insight: "A professional caregiver is going to know how to do things often better than you do. I've learned so many things. A new caregiver would come in and they'd say, 'Well, why do you do it that way?' I'd say, 'Oh, I don't know. This is kind of how we do it.' They'd say, 'Well, here's how I've always done it.' And I'd say, 'Oh, that's a really good idea.' So you will learn so much from them. But at least initially, ask them to try to stick to your routine because your routine is what your care receiver's familiar with. You can slowly change it over time."

Begin with Less Intimate Tasks:

- Start with companionship and household tasks
- Gradually introduce personal care as comfort grows
- Respect dignity by not rushing intimate care
- Allow time for relationships to develop before challenging tasks
- Follow your loved one's cues about readiness

Short Absences:

- After you feel some trust has been built, step away and leave them together
- Run a quick errand by yourself
- Gradually extend your time away
- Debrief with both parties afterward

Validate Successes:

- Acknowledge and celebrate small victories
- Point out positive interactions
- Thank the caregiver for specific helpful actions
- Share positive feedback from your loved one
- Recognize progress in the relationship

Navigate Challenges Together:

- Address difficulties collaboratively
- Approach problems as a team

- Avoid blame when things don't go well
- Focus on solutions rather than blame
- Maintain confidence in the caregiver's abilities

Professional Perspective:

- Recognize that professional caregivers have valuable experience
- Be open to learning from their knowledge
- Consider their suggestions seriously
- Balance established routines with new approaches
- Create a partnership of mutual respect

Clear Communication and Expectations

Open, honest communication creates a foundation for successful working relationships with caregivers.

Establish Communication Preferences:

- Discuss how you prefer to communicate (calls, texts, notes)
- Determine update frequency (after each visit, daily, weekly)
- Set expectations for urgent communications
- Agree on privacy boundaries

Share Expectations Clearly:

- Outline specific tasks and responsibilities
- Discuss priorities and what can be flexible
- Set boundaries about what's off-limits
- Be explicit about medication handling

Address Household Specifics:

- Explain any house rules or preferences
- Discuss shoes-off policies if applicable
- Clarify which areas are private
- Share expectations about cleanliness
- Discuss food and kitchen access

Be Transparent About Monitoring:

- Inform caregivers about any cameras or monitoring systems
- Explain how and why these are used
- Show them how the systems work

Discuss Meal Arrangements:

- Clarify if meals are provided or if they should bring their own
- Set expectations about shared eating
- Discuss food storage and preparation
- Be clear about whether family food is available to them

Invite Feedback:

- Create an environment where caregivers feel safe sharing concerns
- Ask what would help them provide better care
- Encourage questions about unclear expectations
- Schedule regular check-ins to discuss how things are going
- Be open to constructive criticism



Treating Caregivers with Respect

Respect creates a positive environment for everyone.

Show Genuine Interest:

- Ask about their background and experience
- Learn about their family if they're comfortable sharing
- Show interest in their professional goals
- Remember important details they share
- Respect boundaries if they prefer privacy

Be Mindful of Your Behavior:

- Don't treat caregivers as if they're invisible
- Avoid controversial conversations in their presence
- Never smoke around caregivers
- Treat them as valued team members, not servants

Building a Partnership with Care Communities

Watch *The Caregiver's Journey Podcast Episode 35: Build a Partnership With Your Care Community* 

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Understanding and embracing the communal nature of care communities helps set realistic expectations and maximize benefits.

Understand the Trade-offs:

- One-on-one care at home provides individualized attention but less socialization
- Community care offers socialization but less individual attention
- Home care can be more expensive for 24/7 coverage
- Community care distributes costs among residents
- Each approach has distinct advantages and limitations

James Lee, CEO of Bella Groves memory care community, explains these fundamental trade-offs: “Any decision that you make in life is really making trade-offs. If you’re going to receive more of this, you might have less of that. In the context for dementia care, if you wanted one-on-one direct support and care for your loved one, you have the option of that. You can bring somebody into your home and help them with that one-on-one care. The trade-off is it’s going to cost a lot of money. And not only financially is it going to be almost cost prohibitive for the majority of people, but the other part is your loved one is not going to have a lot of social engagement.”

He continues: “Conversely, in a dementia care community, you get a lot of socialization. You get a lot of helping hands, you get a lot of personal relief to you, the family caregiver. But the trade-off of that is, now your loved one is one of many other residents of that community, all of whom have different types of dementia and are experiencing dementia differently.”

Recognize the Group Dynamic:

- Your loved one becomes part of a larger community
- Other residents have varying needs and behaviors
- Staff must balance the needs of all residents
- Some activities and schedules are designed for groups
- The environment is optimized for collective well-being

Anticipate Social Connections:

- Your loved one will interact with multiple residents
- They may form new friendships
- Social stimulation often benefits cognitive health
- Observe which interactions seem most positive

Connect with Other Families:

- Build relationships with families of other residents
- Share experiences and support each other
- Learn from those further along in the journey
- Offer guidance to newer families
- Create an extended support network

Community Integration:

- Participate in family events at the community
- Get to know staff across departments
- Become familiar with routines and schedules
- Learn about community governance and feedback mechanisms
- Consider joining family councils or advisory groups

Your Changing Role

When your loved one moves into a care community, your role transforms in important ways that require adjustment and flexibility.

Shift from Primary Caregiver to Care Partner:

- Recognize areas where you remain the primary caregiver
- Identify areas where you now partner with the care team
- Look for ways to support professional caregivers
- Share your knowledge while respecting their expertise
- Focus on quality time rather than task completion



Sue describes this important transition: “When my care receivers were at home, I was their primary caregiver. When I moved them into the care community, in some areas, I was still the primary caregiver. However, in many other areas, I was now the care partner and I took on the responsibility of doing everything I possibly could to put the primary caregivers in the best position to provide the best care for my loved one.”

Become an Information Resource:

- Create detailed information about your loved one
- Share preferences, routines, and history
- Provide insights about effective approaches
- Update information as changes occur
- Help staff understand the whole person

Adopt a Learning Mindset:

- Ask questions with curiosity, not judgment
- Use phrases like “help me understand” and “teach me”
- Be open to new approaches and techniques
- Recognize professional expertise in dementia care
- Share what you learn with other family members

Balance Advocacy and Partnership:

- Advocate for your loved one’s needs respectfully
- Understand that you and staff are co-advocates
- Approach concerns collaboratively, not confrontationally
- Focus on solutions rather than blame
- Recognize that both you and staff want the best outcomes

Find Your New Normal:

- Develop new routines for visits
- Establish relationships with regular staff
- Determine how to participate in care planning
- Find meaningful ways to stay involved
- Create new traditions and rituals



Understanding Progressive Changes

Dementia continues to progress after moving to a care community, requiring ongoing adaptation and understanding from all parties.

Recognize Continued Progression:

- Understand that symptoms will continue to evolve
- Recognize that care needs will increase over time
- Know that behaviors and abilities will change
- Expect communication challenges to grow
- Prepare for physical changes alongside cognitive ones

Distinguish Between Care Issues and Disease Progression:

- When problems arise, consider disease progression first
- Avoid automatically attributing changes to poor care
- Ask questions before making assumptions
- Collaborate with staff to understand changes
- Work together to adapt approaches as needs evolve

James Lee offers this candid observation: “As family members get used to a standard of care for their loved ones and then they start to see ‘Gosh, mom’s wearing the same clothes more often’ or ‘gosh, she’s having more falls,’ the assumption sometimes is ‘I guess the care has changed around here.’ They tend to go to things like it must be turnover, it must be lack of training, and the first thought isn’t ‘gosh, my mom’s dementia has really progressed.’”

Participate in Regular Care Planning:

- Attend care plan meetings consistently
- Share your observations about changes
- Listen to staff observations
- Participate in developing updated approaches
- Review medications and interventions regularly

Combine Expertise:

- Recognize you are the expert on your loved one
- Acknowledge staff as experts in dementia care
- Bring both perspectives together for best results
- Share historical context staff wouldn’t know
- Learn from staff’s broader experience with similar situations

James Lee frames this partnership beautifully: “I’m really reducing it down to a bit of an oversimplification, but for educational purposes, what we talk to our families about is you are your loved one’s expert, we are dementia experts. And the two together give us the best chance to get this right. There are so many things

that you know about your loved one that we will never know unless you bring that to the table. Conversely, there are so many things that we've learned about dementia care from all of our repetition and years of experience that you can't possibly gather from Google."

Maintain Realistic Expectations:

- Adjust expectations as the disease progresses
- Understand that decline is inevitable
- Focus on quality of life within current abilities
- Celebrate small victories and moments of connection
- Value comfort and dignity over unrealistic goals

Engaging with the Caregiving Team

Building strong relationships with care staff creates better outcomes for your loved one and a more positive experience for everyone involved.



Get to Know All Staff Members:

- Learn names of all caregivers, not just primary ones
- Get to know different shifts, including overnight staff
- Introduce yourself to housekeeping, dining, and activity staff
- Build relationships with nurses and medical professionals
- Connect with administrative and management team

Sue shares her approach: "I prioritized recognizing the community care team and I wanted to get to know all of them. When I saw someone new, I went up to them and learned their name and from then on, I greeted them by name when I saw them. I would spend the night so that I would get to know the overnight care team as well and watch the transitions. Every single week, I gave them a greeting card. When Costco had sales on dark chocolate sea salt caramels, I would always bring them in so that they would have a little special treat. I wanted them to understand is how important they were as part of my loved one's care team."

Show Appreciation Consistently:

- Express thanks regularly and specifically
- Consider small tokens of appreciation (cards, treats)
- Acknowledge efforts beyond routine care
- Recognize challenging situations they've handled well
- Share positive feedback with management

Show Appreciation Consistently:

- Join activities when your presence enhances experience
- Help with meals if this improves your loved one's eating
- Offer to assist with special events or outings
- Share skills or knowledge that might benefit the community
- Find the balance between involvement and letting staff lead

Communicate Effectively:

- Keep communication positive and solution-focused
- Address concerns privately and constructively
- Provide feedback in a way that's easy to implement
- Be specific about what's working well
- Express needs clearly without making demands

Share Your Loved One's Story:

- Help staff understand who your loved one was before dementia
- Share background, accomplishments, and interests
- Update staff on family events and visits
- Bring photos and mementos that tell their story
- Help staff see beyond the current limitations

Maintain Perspective:

- Keep in mind that staff care for multiple residents
- Understand the challenges of dementia care work
- Recognize staffing constraints and systemic challenges
- Appreciate that perfect care is not always possible
- Focus on the overall pattern of care rather than isolated incidents

Nancy offers this thoughtful reminder about care communities: "I always keep abreast of what's going on in the care communities that are around me. I want to make sure if the day comes that I need a care community, I'm not caught at ground zero trying to figure out places I would be interested in."

Final Thoughts: You've Got This

Making decisions about care options, hiring caregivers, and partnering with care communities involves many challenges, but with preparation and the right mindset, you can navigate these transitions successfully.

What Matters Most

Through all the transitions in your caregiving journey, keep these principles in mind:

- **Dignity matters:** Your approach and attitude can preserve your loved one's sense of dignity through every transition.
- **Relationship matters:** This is still the person you love, despite the changes and challenges.
- **Partnership matters:** Building strong, respectful relationships with professional caregivers creates better outcomes for everyone.
- **Self-care matters:** You cannot provide good care or make wise decisions if you're depleted.
- **Grace matters:** Give it generously to yourself, your loved one, and the professional caregivers who join your journey.

Sue summarizes it well: "Check in with yourself regularly. Is this arrangement still working? Do you need additional support? What adjustments might improve the situation for everyone involved?"

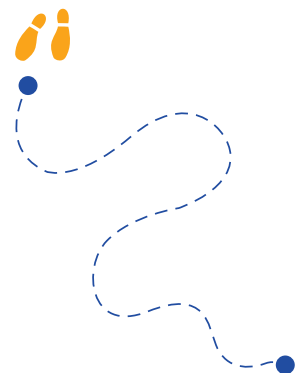
Nancy adds: "As care requirements change, give yourself the grace to be OK when you think 'This is not something I can handle'. Those inflection points are when you know it's time to evaluate additional support options."

You're Not Alone

Countless caregivers have walked this path before. Connect with others through:

- Support groups (in-person or online)
- Caregiver forums and educational events
- Professional resources and advice
- Friends and family who understand
- Partnerships with professional caregivers who share your goals

"We're all on this journey together."



The Caregiver's Journey®

Finally! Practical Tips and Candid Conversations
for Alzheimer's and Dementia Family Caregivers



Connect with us at
www.thecaregiversjourney.org

