

Choosing Alzheimer's Care Planning, Questions, Adjusting

by Jill Lorentz



Jill Lorentz
www.summitresiliencetraining.com • info@summitresiliencetraining.com

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Are you wondering if it is time to find a care community? If your loved one is wandering, in ill health, or their safety at home has become an issue, it may be time to start looking for supplemental care. If you are having stress or health issues that need to be addressed, this may also be a catalyst in starting to look for more skilled care to assist you. How long should I wait? Is it better to move them while they can still adjust, or wait until they are in late stage? These are very valid questions, but they can be answered with pragmatic analysis. Make a list of your loved ones' preferences: what they like to eat, dietary restrictions, allergies, do they bathe or shower and what time of day? What activities do they enjoy? What they did for a living and any routines they followed throughout their lives. Names of family members, photo albums, special clothing, pets or animals they have or have had. History is very important in maintaining quality of life and creating activities. Promises that you will never move someone into a community need to be re-adjusted for the health, well-being, quality of life and dignity of all concerned when living with Alzheimer's.

What questions should you be asking during this time? How are you handling activities of daily living? Are you using strategies and techniques to help you with any issues that arise? Are you doing this alone; by circumstance or by choice? What is the anxiety level of you and your loved one? What steps have you taken to get assistance? What questions should I ask when approach a care community? Is their staff trained in dementia care giving strategies? How often are they trained; 8 hours when they are hired, or quarterly throughout the year? Do they have a training log they can show you? Every community has activities. How does this community work to supply person centered care? What creative ideas do they utilize using a personal history? What are specific preferences that my loved one needs addressed which will help them to adjust to Care community living? Talk with family and share what you have learned to make visits more productive. Host family gatherings and parties at the n



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Adjusting to a care community is not just the job of the person with Alzheimer's! Family members must make adjustments of their own. Guilt from placement can sometimes be misguided and overwhelming? What will people think of me? Did I try hard enough to take care of my loved one? Separation anxiety is killing us! Plan visits around an activity or mealtime, or ½ hour to 45 minutes before they begin. This will help with exit strategies. Leaving without drama is imperative to help with adjustment. Ask the staff for assistance to help you leave without being noticed. Make an excuse that you need to use the facilities or talk with administration and leave at that time. Talk with family and share what you have learned to make visits more productive. Host family gatherings and parties at the new community to avoid embarrassing and public situations that may cause anyone to be uncomfortable.

The person with dementia may only be able to handle 3-5 steps in any tasks, so taking them out in the world can cause great anxiety. They can only handle yes or no questions and cognitive ability to answer inquiries, talk with people they don't know or converse can be very challenging.

Taking the person on outings can be difficult. Who are you doing this activity for, yourself or the person with dementia? Allow at least one hour when you return to get the person back into the building. Have a plan before you begin. This is important. Try not to take the person to their old home, it will be confusing and create triggers for anxiety that will have to be addressed when they return to the community.

My loved one seems to have progressed even faster with the disease since moving in, why is this? It is most likely because they have used familiar phrases and well-meaning family and friends to hide the depth of the disease for many years. When this mask is removed the Alzheimer's stage progression shows its true colors. This is no fault of anyone, it is just how the disease progresses.



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