



Aging Wisely With Linda

Consultations/Consulting • Counseling/Coaching
Expert on Dementia • Speaking/Teaching

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The Road from Home Care to Memory Care

Holidays can often make us more aware that an aging family member needs extra memory care. Maybe we had a visit with mom or dad for the first time since the pandemic and see changes that warrant intervention. Or maybe as a spouse, we recognize changes in our partner and realize it might be time to think about what comes next for his or her well-being.

This is one of those junctures in life that can bring about distress and worry as well as denial and resistance. The road to determining care for a loved one can be challenging, but can lead to a more relaxed and supportive living situation.

The first step is acknowledging and accepting when it is time to find care in order to keep a family member safe and keep the caregiver from burning out.

A Navigator or Sherpa can help you look at all available options and provide a professional evaluation of the communities and resources in your area. You can also contact an aging Life Care Professional, also known as a Geriatric Care Manager, at [Aging Life Care](#). Be sure to choose an advanced professional.

One option to start with is a community-based plan. Most older adults prefer to live in their own homes, and these plans are designed to help them stay in them. It also allows time to explore out-of-home options at a more leisurely pace than an emergency need.

Here is a list of some community-based plans to consider:

Villages: If your loved one only needs a small amount of support, you might explore a “village.” In our area, we have the [Lamorinda Village](#). For a small fee, volunteers will assist with transportation, small home repairs, attend medical appointments with them, and read to them. They also provide social engagement and educational programming.



Technology: Options ranging from emergency response systems to sensors that relay information about the elderly family member's movements in the home to another family member can help some individuals live at home longer. There are even gadgets that will turn off stoves!

Day Care Programs: These are great programs to stimulate and engage those with Alzheimer's or other dementias. There are also "Adult Day Health" programs for those with more physical challenges. In our area, I can give you resources or you can call your local Area Office on Aging.

Home Care: When hiring someone to help in your loved one's home, I recommend only using licensed agencies. Hiring privately can cause liability issues unless you know the person you are hiring, and you are paying them legally. It might be challenging to find someone to watch them fewer than four hours a day, but not impossible. Ask for what you think you need. Some agencies will send someone for no cost to evaluate your needs.

If you are choosing a housing option, I recommend touring the options listed below well before you or your elderly family member needs it. There are many good options, but they can be overwhelming.

Independent Living: This choice allows your loved ones to keep their independence and privacy while enjoying services and amenities. In our area there is the Rossmoor and other senior housing. Most have a buy in and then monthly fees for the amenities.

Continuing Care Retirement Communities: These you buy into, and there are often at least three levels of care from independent to skilled nursing. Some have memory units, so they are appealing to couples when one has dementia, and the other is independent.

Assisted Living Communities: This option provides independent living and a lot of levels of supportive care ranging from medication management to assistance with most daily living activities. There is a community fee upfront, and then payment is month to month, increasing as services grow. Many have memory care units.

Small Residential Care Homes: The licensing for this alternative is usually for six individuals, so there is more one-to-one care in a home-like setting. This option is for those who need more observation and support than a large assisted living facility can provide.



There are other choices for housing, such as having a parent live with you. If you are considering this, contact me through [email](#), and I will send you a checklist to see if this would work for your family.

Affirmation: “I have less stress because I have explored options for the future.”

Resources:

[Villages throughout the country](#)

[Professionals to Assist with Transitions](#)

[Technology Supports](#)

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