

# When is it Time for Memory Care?

## **I've noticed forgetfulness in a loved one recently – is it time to be concerned?**

Perhaps your loved one is “happily confused”, but still able to make some decisions about life needs and those things that bring them joy without being unsafe. Many assisted living communities may be appropriate to meet their needs and provide help for them in areas like medication management, incontinence care, meal reminders and life enrichment or social engagement.

However, if you are becoming more concerned about your family member's safety regarding getting lost outside, hygiene needs, the inability to make clear and safe decisions or challenging behaviors, a memory care setting may be best. Ask questions about security and safety, levels of care, what services are included and what extra services might be needed in the future. Inquire about types of socialization and engagement and how communication is handled with family members.

## **I have a loved one who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease or dementia – if I'm their caregiver, what should I expect?**

We understand that you might feel compelled to take care of your loved one yourself. A diagnosis of a cognitive condition means that often the adult child assumes the role of parent as they care for their loved one who may not be able to live alone anymore. The demands of taking on that responsibility are stark – from worrying about nighttime wanderings to managing their finances, it might become a second full-time job on top of one they might already have.

If you find yourself in that position, know that you're not alone. The Alzheimer's Association estimates there are over 11 million Americans currently providing unpaid care to people living with Alzheimer's Disease or dementia. In other words, family members or spouses who have taken on the responsibility.

## **I've been acting as a caregiver, but I think it's time to consider memory care. What should I look for in a memory care community?**

Burnout is common among caregivers for those with Alzheimer's Disease or dementia. The demands of caring for someone, along with the emotional difficulty of watching their deterioration, are extraordinarily difficult.

If you've reached a point where your loved one requires full-time memory care, it's time to start looking at full-time memory care communities. Just a few of the considerations to keep in mind:

- How do they keep memory care residents engaged?
- Are the residents cared for in a dignified way?
- How do they handle the “behaviors” that are common in those with dementia?
- What safety measures are in place?
- What kind of programming do they provide?
- Does the community feel like “home”?



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## How do we discuss a move with someone living with Alzheimer's or dementia?

When someone is experiencing cognitive impairment, it's crucial to remember that while they may not be able to comprehend every nuance and word of the conversation, they most definitely pick up on tone, mood and expression. Not only do the words that you choose to use matter, your body language and tone of voice also have an impact.

While this is a difficult time for all involved, it's wise to keep your loved one's emotions in mind. Continued positivity in the face of hardship is difficult and immensely important for your loved one.

It's best to talk honestly about how you're feeling without being cynical or turning to anger or frustration. Your loved one is very likely to understand that this is hard for you, too. Continue to listen throughout the conversation and not talk over your loved one. The first conversation is also a great time to ask for feedback and ask your loved one if they have any questions, concerns or comments.

Also, try not to use terms like, "you need more help", we don't want to challenge their spirit of independence or "I can't take care of you", we don't want them to feel they are a burden. Frame the conversation around a doctor's visit, that the doctor is recommending this stay for a time. Ask the physician to be a part of the conversation, prepare with them ahead of the visit.

If they are early in their diagnosis, you might consider taking them along on tours of communities but be cautious not to cause them unneeded anxiety. Maybe your family member liked to travel, speak of this time at a community as a mini-vacation or retreat.

## What is Prestige's memory care program, Expressions?

We believe a resident's well-being is directly related to how they feel and interact with the world around them. Our award-winning memory care program Expressions makes our residents feel accepted, important and comfortable. Our goal is to become an extended family, creating a buffer against the fear and stress of the illness.

On top of providing industry-leading care, it's also our job to keep our residents engaged and fulfilled. Expressions focuses on turning daily activities into memorable and meaningful events.

Using innovative care techniques and life enrichment programming, Expressions provides people with dementia an outlet for creativity through five aspects of healthy aging. Most importantly, we take care of the details so that you can focus on the more positive aspects of your relationship with your loved one.

## Does every Prestige memory care community use the Expressions program?

Yes! All Prestige Senior Living communities that provide memory care do so with the Expressions program, it's the foundation for all of our memory care programming across our entire company.

Each memory care community is staffed by teams of compassionate experts with years of experience working with memory care residents. They employ the Best Friends™ Approach, pioneered by David Troxel, MPH, a dementia expert who works closely with Prestige Senior Living.



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## What is the Best Friends™ Approach?

From David Troxel's website: "Simply put...what a person with dementia needs most of all is a friend, a 'Best Friend'. This can be a family member, friend, or staff member who empathizes with their situation, remains loving and positive, and is dedicated to helping the person feel safe, secure and valued."

## What does the future look like?

While each individual is different, there are some things you may encounter. Persons with dementia will ebb and flow through this disease, experiencing good days and difficult moments; it's important to listen, but also remain positive in your conversations. They may complain of loneliness or frustration with another resident, they may miss home and certain foods they are used to, they may talk about a spouse who has passed away and they may not remember your name.

Talk with the community about your concerns and tools or interventions they have found successful in re-directing your loved one in a positive and validating way. Reminiscing about their life, the joys and adventures you experienced as a family are always helpful. Maybe bring in one of their favorite meals to enjoy together and continue to celebrate life events like birthdays and anniversaries.

If a spouse has passed, talk about how they met, their courtship and family life, try not to remind them regularly that they have passed, so as not to cause them daily grief. Keep an album of family pictures nearby to chat about the special times in life and don't forget to laugh!

