

Moving a Person with Dementia into a Caregiver's Home

Moving can be difficult for the individual(s) who will be moving a person with dementia to their home. There are many things to consider before moving an older adult into your home, including, but certainly not limited to, what affect this change will have on your life-style, relationships and finances. There are also emotional issues to consider.

Consider living arrangements. Do you have enough room for your loved one? Will you have a private space that you can personalize for them? Do you need to make safety enhancements to protect your loved one?

You will need to consider financial issues. What new expenses will you have? Can your loved one pay for these? If not, will it burden you financially? Are other family members able and willing to help with expenses?

There will be changes to your daily routines. Will you or another family member be available to provide assistance? Will the primary caregiver be available to take this person to medical and other appointments? Will you and other family members feel comfortable providing required daily care and be able to cope with changes in privacy?

Because moving can be extremely stressful, the number of moves should be minimized as much as possible. Family members need to try to anticipate the future needs of the person with dementia. For example, a person with dementia may eventually need help with bathing and toileting. Will you be able to provide this type of care or hire a paid caregiver as their needs increase?

Moving can be a challenge for anyone, but for a person with dementia it becomes even more difficult. A person with Alzheimer's disease or dementia might not be able to recognize that it is time to move. Planning a move and giving choices to the person with dementia can be especially complicated for the family.

When to Move

The best time to move a person with dementia is when they are stable. An illness or hospital stay may make it difficult for a person with dementia to cope with a move and adjust to new surroundings. However, in many cases, moving only becomes necessary after a person has suffered a serious illness or injury.

Giving Choices

A person with dementia who is forced to move may not adjust as well as a person with dementia who has been involved in the decision making process. Be honest and provide as much information as appropriate. People with dementia who have been tricked into moving may become agitated and suspicious. Involve the person as much as possible, depending on their ability to participate. Giving the person with dementia some choices and control of their situation can make moving an easier process. However, for some, too much involvement may induce stress. They may become extremely upset or confused if family members talk about the move. Family members should be empowered to make necessary decisions, even when they're tough and may be met with anger and resistance from the person with dementia.

If there's someone besides the primary caregiver who is trusted by the person with dementia, i.e. other family member, friend, religious leader, it may be good to involve them in discussing the move with the person with dementia. Families may even find it helpful in some cases to tell the person with dementia that the doctor has ordered the move.

Planning Before the Move

Family members should meet ahead of time to discuss the move and their needs and the needs of the person with dementia. Habits and rituals of the person with dementia should be considered to determine the best way to care for the person and to minimize confusion. Familiar objects such as a favorite easy chair, familiar decorations or pictures can help make the person feel more comfortable in their new surroundings. Labeling different areas of the home or things within a room with signs can help the person with dementia become familiar with the layout of their new home. It is also important to keep in mind the habits and routines of everyone in the household. It may be necessary for the family to make some changes in their lifestyles in order to better accommodate the person with dementia. It will be confusing enough for them to live in unfamiliar surroundings without also suddenly having to change everything about their lives.

Moving Day

It's best to move the person with dementia at a time of day when he or she is at their "best". Moving can be stressful and trigger anxiety for anyone. It may be beneficial to the family and the person with dementia for other family members or friends to take the person out for the day while other family members complete the move. It is often best to have everything in its place before introducing the new space to your loved one.

After the move

It is important for family members to maintain an optimistic attitude in order to encourage the person with dementia to view the move as positive. Telling the person with dementia "I'm glad you came to live here, now we can spend more time together" can help to make them feel welcome, safe and secure. Family members may need to spend extra time with their loved one to help them adjust to the new environment. Be aware that you may see a decline in your loved one after the move. They may suffer from temporary sleep problems, wandering, falls and appetite changes. Any change can be unsettling and it may take some time for them to adjust. Be patient and flexible.