

Understanding Dementia: Transitions

Thinking about a move to LTC?

Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases, which mean that person's symptoms will gradually get worse. There may be a time when you can no longer provide care for them at home. As a caregiver, you should not consider a move as a failure or selfishness. Recognize that it is a very common step in the overall progression of the disease.

As you consider the move you may experience a broad range of emotions from guilt, loss, sadness, anger, shame and resentment or even failure. You may even have second thoughts about your decision. It is important to understand that these are all normal reactions and that you are not alone!

It's a balancing act and you need to consider how best to meet the needs of the person living with dementia and your needs and well-being.

Do your research, ask questions, take tours and get to know the long-term care homes. Pay attention to your gut feelings; these are your instincts, which can be very helpful in if determining a home is appropriate for your loved one.

Consider your priorities and expectations. Don't base decisions just on appearances. In this case, a more expensive room, does not necessarily mean better care. Keep an open mind, talk with staff, ask questions, spend time sitting and watching while you visit the homes.

Reference:

Alzheimer Society Day-to-Day Series

-Considering the move to a Long-Term Care home, -Preparing for a move, -Handling moving day, -Adjusting after a move



Moving day

There is no one set answer to how to handle moving day. Some people will be willing to move to long-term care and understand the reasons for it, others will be very resistive or be advanced with their dementia and not understand the reasons why they can no longer live at home. If possible, the optimal experience would be to explain the move simply and gently to the person with dementia, with a focus on the positive aspects such as socializing, enjoyable activities and the care that you are no longer able to provide.

If the person with dementia is not able to understand the reasons for the move or is very resistive, you may have to be more creative in your approach. Working with your counsellor from the Alzheimer Society may be beneficial to help you create a plan. If you aren't already connected, call your local Alzheimer Society and you can ask to speak with a counsellor. Anyone can refer!

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Settling in after the move

Common Concerns about settling in	Tips to help you address your concerns
<p>I'm not sure how long it will take the person with dementia to adjust to their new environment</p>	<p>Try to be patient as the person with dementia settles in. For some, it may take weeks or months and for others, less. On the other hand, the person with dementia may adjust quite well to their new surroundings. This may leave you with mixed emotions. These feelings are completely natural. Remember, you have not lost your role as a caregiver, you are now sharing the responsibility with others.</p>
<p>I don't know how to react if the person asks difficult questions or says things like "I want to go home."</p>	<p>Find out what may be triggering difficult questions or statements. Is there person feeling unsafe? Sometimes the person simply needs reassurance. Reach out to the teach at the home to ask for suggestions or your support at the Alzheimer Society.</p>
<p>I'm not sure how often I should visit</p>	<p>Visit as often as you want and stay long as you feel comfortable. The important thing is that you make each visit- regardless of the length or frequency- as full and as rewarding as possible for you both.</p>
<p>I'm not sure what to do if the staff provides care differently than the person used to</p>	<p>Acknowledge that there will be differences between the caregiving routine at the long-term care home and how you cared for the person in the home. Share your knowledge about the person with the staff.</p>
<p>Now that I'm not responsible for the day-to-day care, I'm not sure what my role is.</p>	<p>Focus your time and energy on providing the person with a sense of belonging and love that no one else can give. If you wish to continue to contribute to the physical care of the person, negotiate what your role is with the staff. Allowing others to take responsibility for the day-to-day caring tasks does not make you a less important caregiver.</p>
<p>Who can I call for support?</p>	<p>Most long-term care homes have a social worker who can help support caregivers through the transition or you can ask for a referral from Ontario Health at Home for a BSO Transitional Lead https://hnhb.behaviouralsupportsontario.ca</p>