

8 Warning Signs That It's Time to Talk Assisted Living with Your Aging Parents

It can be one of the most daunting conversations they'll ever have — bringing up the possibility that their parents might need to move into an assisted living community. With the average lifespan getting longer each year, many people will need additional care in their lifetimes. The question becomes “When?” And, more importantly, “How will I know when it's time?”

The truth is, there is no one defining sign that means steps should be taken. It is a gradual process that can be difficult to notice right away, especially for those of us who are predisposed to want to only see the positive. Our parents have always been strong and independent, so it is difficult to accept that they may not be able to take care of themselves anymore.

So how does one determine when an aging family member needs some extra assistance? Looking for these signs can help you know when it is time to talk to your parents about assisted living options.

1. Do They Have Injuries Hidden Up Their Sleeves?

Many seniors want to remain independent, so they will try to cover up whatever trauma they might have encountered at home, such as bruises or scrapes. This suggests a dangerous living environment, and should be handled seriously.

2. Has Personal Hygiene Become Optional?

Personal hygiene can become more physically challenging to keep up, meaning cleanliness and health can decline. Many seniors are afraid of slipping and falling in the tub or shower, making these tasks seem like daunting endeavors.

3. Do They Seem Confused?

You don't have to be a doctor to know when your parents are acting out of the ordinary. Missing appointments, skipping medications, and wearing the same clothes every day are all signs that suggest your parent may need extra care.

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4. Do They Seem Blue?

Depression in older adults is often overlooked, but it is just as serious. Many seniors begin to feel isolated, and they withdraw from social activities they once loved.

5. Is the Fridge Full of Expired Cartons?

If you notice a significant weight loss in your loved ones, try checking the fridge. If there is spoiled food, this should raise a red flag. Cooking can be confusing or challenging, and trips to the grocery store might be impossible, so some seniors eat only what they have to, or skip meals all together. This increases the likelihood for illnesses and poor nutrition.

6. Is the Mail Piling Up?

Reading becomes difficult as we age, so reading the mail can become quite a chore. For this reason, seniors can begin to neglect their mail, resulting in bills and letters going unread.

7. Can't Take Two Steps in the House?

Household chores can often fall by the wayside as it becomes harder to lift and carry things. This can create a dangerous living environment, as it makes threatening falls more likely. You should also take note of environmental damage such as dents in the car and burnt cookware. These signs can hint at confusion or mobility problems.

8. Are They Jumping at Shadows?

Some seniors can become increasingly paranoid of those around them. They may feel that their neighborhood isn't safe anymore, or begin hearing strange noises in the night.

It is hard to be objective with the ones we love. We want our parents to live long, healthy, independent lives — something we want for ourselves when we grow older. Experts in the field agree, though, that broaching the conversation sooner is always better than later. Knowing these signs can give you concrete examples to use when talking with your parents about how much you want to see them in a safe and happy place. And that can make that most daunting conversation a lot less stressful.

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