



# *Transitioning to Senior Care*

**Guide to Helping Your Loved  
One Transition to Senior Living**

#### **Disclaimer**

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**Introduction**

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## **Congratulations! You and your loved one have chosen a senior living community and signed the contract. Now it's time to transition to your new home.**

- Even though everyone agrees that senior living is the right choice, your loved one may still feel anxious, particularly if they're leaving their beloved family home. You may have your own concerns over whether the right decision was made, how your loved one will adjust to their new environment, or how they'll be treated by staff.
- Then there's the business of preparing to move. What will you take, and who can benefit from what's left behind? Who will sell the house?
- Finally, it's moving day. How can you help your loved one settle in?
- Senior living offers so many benefits—a chance for your loved one to explore new activities, make new friends, pursue intellectual interests, and thrive in their new communities—but it's also a time of great change.
- Knowing what to expect and preparing for it can help ease fears about the unknown and provide opportunities to celebrate a new chapter. Use this guide to help you navigate your loved one's transition to senior living.

### **Involve your senior living community team!**

- Ask about resources that they recommend, such as realtors, moving companies and professional downsizing specialists.
- Arrange an in-home visit from the community so staff can get to know your loved one and answer any questions you may have.
- Visit the community with your loved one to meet the staff and residents, enjoy a meal, or participate in activities.

## Talk About Your Hopes and Fears

Even though you may be making most of the arrangements, helping your loved one feel like they are in charge of their transition can help them become more comfortable with it. Keep the communication open and share your respective hopes and fears about the move.

For example, your loved one might embrace the opportunity to no longer have to care for a home, yet still feel sad about leaving their home behind. Acknowledge their feelings, both positive and negative, while finding ways to re-frame their concern as a benefit to them.

- This is also an opportunity to honestly share your concerns, too. Were you your loved one's caregiver and now feel guilty about "putting them away?" Do you struggle with whether or not this was the best choice for your loved one? Are you worried about their care? Make sure to discuss your feelings so your loved one can support you, too.

Finally, preserving your relationships throughout—from making the decision to making the move—should be your highest aim. Celebrate the fact that you've all made it this far in what is often a challenging process for most families. Then make a plan for the next day so you and your loved one feel a sense of progress.

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## Walk down memory lane

Take a tour of the home with your loved one. Go from room to room and share cherished memories. Thank each room for serving its purpose and bringing joy to your family.





## Make Plans in Advance

- To reduce your loved one's anxiety, help them make plans for their new living space in advance of the move. Ask:
- When should we visit?
- Schedule a visit or two in advance so you and your loved one can meet the staff, talk to residents, get pictures and layouts of the new apartment, find out what activities are scheduled, pick up some menus, etc. You may even want to take pictures of the staff and residents and use them to help your loved one become familiar with their names and faces. The more you can visit beforehand, the more comfortable your loved one will be on moving day.

## How should we decorate your new space?

- Using the pictures and layouts gathered in one of your advance visits, talk about how you'll decorate the new space. Make a list of furniture that your loved one wants to bring and where it will go. Ask about favorite photos, artwork, keepsakes, and other treasures that they may want to bring with them. Not only will it help them get excited about moving, you can also use the list you've put together to start packing!

## What kinds of activities do you want to participate in?

- Look at the schedule for your loved one's senior living community and start planning some of the activities they may be interested in. Consider putting together a schedule that matches their current routine—physical activities in the morning, bridge in the afternoon, Saturday movie night, and Sunday services. Not only will they have something to look forward to, mirroring their current schedule will lessen their fears.

## What will you want to eat?

- Remind your loved that they no longer have to cook for themselves! Simply look through the menus and help them choose their meals. This is also a good time to discuss any special dietary needs so you can talk with the staff about them before the move. Volunteer to join them for dinner on their first night in their new home.
- Helping your loved one make these decisions in advance will keep them from being overwhelmed by decisions when they first move in. They'll be more familiar with the staff, residents, facility, and their own space—and they'll have had a voice in the process.

**Tip:** Remember to take the process one day at a time. Rely on the help from others and from the community to make the transition and move-in less stressful.

## Get Ready for the Big Day

Expect the process of moving to be a long one. You'll want plenty of time to not only prepare, pack and move, you'll want to make sure that you've helped transition your loved one so that they're ready to go.

1. Ask for help – Get advice from staff members about what can be done in advance to make the move easier—and what to expect on moving day.
2. Build a plan – Start with an agreed-upon plan that covers everything that needs to be done between now and moving day. Stay on track by focusing on one room or area of the house at a time.
3. Store historical documents – Put all of your loved one's historical legal and financial documents—wills, power of attorney, taxes, bank statements, policies, etc.—into a box and store them at your home or another location for safekeeping.
4. Save short-term documents – Keep information your loved one needs in the near term—such as community information, medication information, contact lists, medical information, doctor and other appointments, care plans, etc.—in a separate folder.
5. Pick up supplies – Purchase packing supplies, including boxes, packing material, markers, scissors and anything else you might need. If you'll be moving your loved one yourself, make arrangements for a moving truck.
6. Sort it out – Put items into categories by what you intend to do with them: keep, donate, sell, gift, toss or recycle. Note (or take photos of) which items have been donated or given to family members, in case your loved one wonders where a certain item might be.
7. Let it go – Consider gifting highly sentimental items to family members or friends—or give them to a worthy cause—to ease your loved one's emotions.
8. Pack it up – Carefully pack the items that your loved one wants to keep into boxes and mark the outside. Donate, sell, gift, toss or recycle the rest. Invite family and friends to help and make it festive by sharing memories and having fun!
9. MOVE!



### What to Keep (and Bring)

Most senior communities will provide a list, but plan to bring:

- Personal care – Toothbrush, toothpaste, brush/comb, shaving kit, cosmetics, hand/bath towels and washcloths
- Clothing – Comfortable easy-on/easy-off clothing, rubber-soled shoes and slippers, undergarments, socks, pajamas, robe and light sweater/jacket
- Sleep items – Sheets, blanket, throw, pillows, bedspread, clock
- Favorites – Snacks, books, music, games, movies, etc.



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