



FEATURE ARTICLE FROM ALWAYS BEST CARE

How to Talk with Your Parents About Assisted Living Communities

by Karen Durkin

One of the most difficult steps in life for both parents and their adult children is the move of a loved one to an assisted living community. Nearly all of us who face this are never fully ready for it or emotionally prepared enough to do so when the time comes.

The “aging of America” already is having a significant impact on families and the pressures and demands of parental caregiving. This will only continue to accelerate.

- 10,000 people turn 65 in the United States every day
- The U.S. population 65 or older will double during the next 30 years – by 2040 one in five Americans (81+ million) will be 65 or older
- 80% of seniors have at least one chronic health condition – 50% have at least two
- **By 2030, 7.7 million adults 65 or older will have Alzheimer’s**
- Currently there are more than 30,000 assisted living communities in the United States serving more than one million residents
- Extreme stress **can take as much as 10 years off a family caregiver’s life**

With these aging trends, more and more of us will likely be facing this tough and important decision in the coming years. Knowing exactly how to identify when your mom or dad requires assisted living is challenging not only because of the emotions surrounding it, but also because the indicators are often not extremely clear, especially in the beginning. Adult children also can often be in denial about the severity of their **parent’s decline.**

Assisted living communities are designed for the individual who still has and desires some independence but is beyond the level of care families are able to provide. Too often the signs are more subtle and do not become obvious until the decision has been avoided for too long.

According to Always Best Care Senior Services Chief Executive Officer Michael Newman, there are both things we can do to take a more preventative approach and specific signs to look for with an aging parent. Newman offers the following five tips to help identify if your

parent may be in need of assisted living. Additionally, he offers some key guidelines on how best to make this difficult transition with your parent.

1. **Failure to Thrive** – your mom or dad is having difficulty with daily activities; they are not eating well; not showering as often as before; not keeping the house as clean; not dressing as well.
2. **Chronic Health Conditions** – chronic health conditions are becoming noticeable with your mom or dad. They may be getting sick more often, losing or gaining weight, becoming more frail, having difficulty walking or with balance issues, or needing more time to recover from colds.
3. **Behavioral Changes** – your mom or dad has become more forgetful, more agitated, and is having mood swings.
4. **Medication Management Issues** – your mom or dad is forgetting to take their prescribed medications.
5. **Socialization Declines** – your conversations with your parent are getting shorter and shorter, your mom or dad is having less community involvement and less engagement with friends.

How to Communicate to Your Parent and Best Transition With Them

No less difficult than making the decision to move a loved one into an assisted living community is the task of communicating with your mom or dad about the need for assisted care and beginning the transition.

Newman offers the following six tips on how best to begin the process of moving your mom or dad into assisted living.

1. **Early Intervention** – the earlier you intervene and begin communicating with your father or mother the better. It is easy to delay talking to your parent about their possible or pending move to an assisted living community but early conversation and involvement are keys to a successful and smooth transition.
2. **Early Education** – your parent needs to be educated about their assisted living care just as much as you do. Encourage your mom or dad to visit friends and others they know at a community. Always Best Care offices help arrange escorted tours of communities where your parents can meet the staff and see the facilities, visit with residents, have a meal in the dining room and gather the information needed to make an informed decision. This will help significantly when **it's time for mom or dad to move to a community**.
3. **Involvement in the Decision-Making Process** – be sure to take your mom or dad on tours of facilities being considered and ask them what they would like in a facility should they ever need assisted care. The more they are engaged in the process the smoother the transition will be.

4. **Family Involvement** – This is critical. The most successful transitions are those where the family remains involved with regular visits, especially on holidays, birthdays, etc., and engages in special outings with their parent.

5. **Focus on Quality vs. Quantity** – spending quality time with your mom or dad as they transition to assisted care is far more important than the number of times you visit them. Meaningful interaction is what your mother or father will appreciate most.

6. **Be Honest** – do not tell your parent that they will be able to come home soon to avoid a difficult and painful situation in the short term. It will be far worse for your mom or dad when reality sets in. Lying to them about their length of stay is one of the worst things you can do. Honesty is your best policy.

Above all else, says Newman, is to do what is best for your mom and dad and not what is most convenient or most cost effective for you, and definitely not by selecting a place you in which you would like to live.

“When you come from a place of making decisions 100 percent on what is best for your parent, then you know you have made the right decision and then you can accept it,” Newman said.

For more information on how to find the best assisted living care for your loved one please visit [Always Best Care or call](#) toll-free 1-844-723-CARE (2273).

About the author: Karen Durkin is a senior executive with 20+ years leading integrated communications for prominent national organizations. She was the chief executive officer of the **Women’s Sports Foundation**, the leading public charity founded by Billie Jean King to help more girls and women lead healthy and active lives. She also served as executive vice president of communications and brand strategy for the National Hockey League, and as chief marketing officer for the Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA). In 2009, Karen was named one of *Shape Magazine’s* **“Women Who Shape the World.”** She is a magna cum laude graduate of the University of Rochester, and holds a master’s of science from Northwestern University’s Medill School of Journalism.

#



About Always Best Care®

Founded in 1996, Always Best Care Senior Services is based on the belief that having the right people for the right level of care means peace of mind for the client and family. Always Best Care assists seniors with a wide range of illnesses and personal needs, and currently provides more than 3 million hours of care every year. Franchise opportunities are available to individuals interested in **leveraging the company’s clear strategy and proven track record for delivering affordable, dependable service to seniors in their local areas.**

By working with case managers, social workers, discharge planners, doctors, and families, Always Best Care franchise owners provide affordable, comprehensive solutions that can be **specifically matched to meet a client’s particular physical or social needs.** The hallmark services of the Always Best Care business portfolio include non-medical in-home care and assisted living finder and referral services, with skilled home health care now being phased in throughout the country. For more information, visit www.AlwaysBestCare.com. For franchise opportunities, visit www.FranchiseWithAlwaysBestCare.com.

Always Best Care also offers *Always in Touch*, a telephone reassurance program that provides a daily phone call to seniors and disabled adults who are living alone and have limited contact with the outside world. Always in Touch is the **only** absolutely **free** national telephone reassurance program of its kind anywhere in the USA and Canada. For more information on Always in Touch, or to request an application, visit www.Always-in-Touch.com.

Another special program from Always Best Care is *Always on Call* –provided **free** to Always Best Care clients and their families with a minimum of 5 hours of monthly care. Families will have **anytime** access to physicians 24/7 if **they're** considering ER or urgent care for non-emergency issues, if they need a non-narcotic prescription or refill, if they **can't take time off** from work or school, if **they're** traveling and need medical care, if their primary physician is not available, or if they have a sick child, spouse or elderly parent. This special service is provided to Always Best Care clients and their families by 24HourMDNow, an independent company not affiliated with Always Best Care.

May, 2014