Comprehensive Guide on Caring For Seniors and Elderly Parents



ABSTRACT

Taking care of elderly parents is a season many of us will walk through. Everyone who begins that journey has many questions. Perhaps you're an only child, and the responsibility of taking care of your elderly parents is yours alone. Maybe there are only a few options available for additional help due to location and affordability.

You may have had a challenging relationship with your parents growing up or had a great relationship and now find it difficult to see them in this state. Though every person's scenario will look different, elder care is achievable with the right resources.

INTRODUCTION

Remaining in good health as an older adult requires much more than what medication and treatment alone have to offer. Here is a complete guide of advice, and some accompanying resources, for those who want their loved ones to age as comfortably, independently, and vibrantly as possible.

I. Top 10 Tips For Caring For Older Adults



The creeping prevalence of aging societies isn't just a challenge for national governments, policymakers, and healthcare providers to solve. It affects everyone who has, or will have, an elder family member or loved one in their lives—and everyone lucky enough to grow old themselves.

- 1. Keep care at home if possible. Try to find care providers who are willing to provide care for your loved one outside a hospital setting and in the home. For some care providers this may mean home visits, for others it could mean telehealth appointments.
- **2. Coordinate your care.** Try to coordinate services among all those providing care for your loved one—both formal and informal. This means everyone from the primary care physician to the person who may come in once a week to clean the house.
- 3. Make care regimens person centered. Encourage your loved one to make their own decisions about the type of care they receive and when and where they would like to receive it.
- **4. Enable social inclusion.** Create opportunities for your loved one to play an active role in your family and in your community. Isolation can be a major cause of emotional distress for older people.
- **5. Stay up to date on the latest technology.** Keep abreast of new technologies that can improve every aspect of care your loved one receives. These may be as simple as FaceTime appointments with your doctor, or as advanced as safety monitoring systems connected to a coordinated care network.
- **6. Investigate your insurance options**. Explore long term care insurance options in detail and find the one that is right for your situation.
- **7.** Take care of the caregivers. Recognize the challenges inherent in caring for a loved one in need and make use of any resources available to you in these efforts. This may include online support networks, opportunities to spend time away from your loved one, or rejuvenatory activities to help relieve stress and tension.
- **8. Learn and practice mindful communication.** Don't be afraid to have what can be a tough conversation about end of life care with your loved one. Make use of the tools and resources available online to talk with your loved one about the kind of treatment they receive and where they would like to receive it.
- **9. Educate yourself**. Try to keep up to date with the latest innovations in elder care and best practices in long term care.
- **10.** Create a safe environment. Make sure the environment in which your loved one lives encourages their independence and autonomy, mitigates and risk of injury or harm, and feels like a personalized home environment.

II. How to Overcome Your Aging Parent's Loneliness?

How to Overcome Your Aging Parent's Loneliness

Despite the ever-growing digital disruption in the domain of social media platforms, seniors are lonely more than ever before. Whatever be the root cause, whether they are unlettered to the usage of modern technology or disinterested in virtual connection, the baby boomers experience the highest level of solitude.

What Factors Chain An Elder In The Strings Of Isolation?

Many choose desolation as an option. Since it is up to you whether you want to keep connected with your family and kin or wish to stay away from gatherings. However, unarguably, the social circle shrinks as soon as an individual steps into his declining age.

Either their bosom friends bid farewell to this eternal world, their well-acquainted ones migrate to some untraceable place, or the people in their good-book get indulged in their own family. Lack of transportation, disability, and mobility issues can also contribute as a hurdle in getting connected with loved ones.

As a matter of fact, we can't stop the ticking of clocks and arrest the process of aging. The signs of seniority get visible no matter how much you attempt to avoid them. Since aging brings fragility, impaired vision, decreased mobility, and nagging health concerns, it becomes problematic to leave the house.



Elders who have blindness or deafness or need external aid to perform their daily errands may also compromise on stepping out of the house due to embarrassment or dependability factors. As a result, they chain themselves in the strings of isolation.

<u>Does Loneliness Lead To Severe Consequences?</u>

Loneliness apparently doesn't seem to be troublesome at first; however, when it is measured for an elderly citizen, it is not something to keep at negligence anymore.

Mental and Physical Health Get Drained Out

Loneliness contributes to substantial problems under the hood, impacting an individual's physical health and quality of life. The study further revealed that they had a 59% increased risk of physical and mental health decline, jeopardizing their ability to function smoothly in their day-to-day tasks.

Body Surrenders to Many Serious Ailments

Scientists state that isolation physiologically impacts the same way as chronic stress does on the human body. When a person is subject to isolation, there is a likelihood of the stress hormones release, called cortisol. This hormone not only stimulates inflammation and damages immunity but also contributes to heart disease and diabetes. The other threatening aftermath of loneliness is early Alzheimer's disease.

These serious implications stress an individual to rectify his parents' isolation by remedying their loneliness with favorable options. If you are looking for tips to overcome your aging parent's loneliness, further discussion will open the world of opportunities to fight against desolation.

Tips and Tricks to Combat Loneliness in Aging Parents

The consequences are severe; however, there are always certain ways out for problems and concerns. Your parents must be of declining age and experiencing loneliness. But you don't need to be concerned any longer. This article attempts to bring before you all those quirky tips that you need to execute to overcome your parents' isolation.

Get ready to set the wheels in motion with these functional strategies.

Pay Heed to Their Sayings

All an individual needs are open ears. Your parents once used to decode your broken language; now, they want you to understand their fragmented conversation. Investing your few minutes with them will help you to dilute the consequences of their loneliness.

Encourage them to strike up a conversation with you, provoke them to ask questions, and express themselves.

It seems easy at first; however, it requires persistent patience and dedication. Their willingness to get actively engaged with you will consume considerable time.

Plan To Execute What They Love

Try to jot down the things your parents love to engage in. Learn what their interests are, and design a plan that incorporates their interests in it. If your parents love listening to music, tune their favorite playlist while feeding them or motivate them to join a community choir.

Engage Your Parents in Something New To Them

Engage your parents in those activities which they didn't try or attempt to try. This will help them unwind their tangled thoughts and refresh their mind. A new hobby is equivalent to keeping an individual actively busy. New activities may include meeting with new people, joining a book club and local community center to participate in funloving undertakings.

Make Them Talk To Young Ones

It is a common saying that people start behaving like a kid when they enter their feeble age. Thus, the best remedy to tackle their loneliness is bridging the generation gap. Let them play with their grandchildren or the neighbors' kids, which will eventually instill the feeling of happiness and joy in them.



Drag Them out If they Are Mobility-Reluctant

Many senior citizens don't want to leave the comfort of their homes and become extremely reluctant when it comes to taking them outside. As an offspring, you must break their shell and drag them out. Remaining in an ogress environment will stale their spirits, so it is necessary to introduce them to the outside climate.

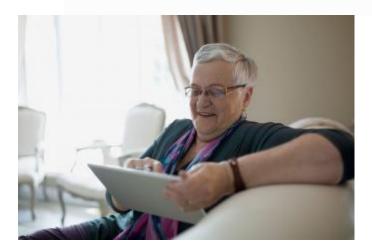
Bring Them a Living Toy — A Pet Animal

Although animals cannot be an alternative to human companionship, they can still serve as a good time passing object. Your parents can spend their time taking care of the pet means they are physically participating. Their physical engagements will not only help them get physical but mental benefits as well. In fact, according to a study, a pet stimulates chemical reactions in the brain that are responsible for lessening cortisol levels and increasing serotonin generation.

The ways mentioned above serve as an excellent antidote to combatting senior citizen's loneliness. If you have one in your home, don't let them stand in the desert of disappointment and desolation for so long.

Your parents owe you so much more than what you can give them. They need you, and you need them for sure.

III. Stimulating Mind Games and Brain Teasers for Seniors



Keeping your mind "physically fit" is important to one's health as a senior citizen. It's well known among doctors and researchers that senior brain games and mentally-stimulating leisure activities help maintain one's cognitive abilities that can decline as people age.

Online Brain Games for Seniors

Seniors can enjoy a large selection of games to stimulate thinking online. The following list introduces a handful of resources with hundreds of games:

AARP Brain Games

AARP is a well-known nonprofit organization with a mission to help people 50 and over improve the quality of their lives. This is reflected in the mind games for seniors they offer. Word games for senior citizens such as crosswords, Word Search and Word Wipe are popular favorites.

They also offer a selection of strategy games and brain teasers for the elderly to get you thinking, and if you like to socialize they also offer group games that allow you to play with or against others. More common games you can play by yourself or with others include mahigning and several variations of solitaire.

Braingle Offers Senior Brain Teasers and More

Braingle is more than a game site. They also offer daily exercises designed to help improve memory and manage stress. This site offers plenty of games to entertain and stimulate your thinking and also lets you rate their puzzles and quizzes if you become a registered member.

Registration is free and allows access to a selection of exclusive games. Along with these features, the over 200,000 members can join a large online community of others who enjoy brain teasers, puzzles, and quizzes. You can make friends on the forum boards and chat with others.



Sharp Brains

Sharp Brains not only offers plenty of brain teasers and games, they also teach you about your brain. For those interested in learning more, they provide a list of popular articles dealing with brain care and fitness. Brain teasers you can play for free on the site include visual illusions, language and logic mind teasers and pattern recognition games.

Puzzle Prime

This website offers free games that are thought provoking for people of all ages. "Puzzle crime stories" give you information about a fictional case and you need to use your brain to solve it. If you get stuck, there's a forum to find clues with other players.

There are also a variety of types of brain teasers including riddles, math problems, and even chess games. You can also choose games based on their difficulty. Sign up for their email newsletter and you'll receive puzzles in your mail as well.

Brain Den

Brain Den has puzzles, riddles and brain teasers that seniors will love working through on their own, or with friends. You can choose from puzzles based on logic, geometry or pictures. There's also a forum to discuss puzzle clues and how to solve them. You can also play chess, sudoku, and crossword puzzles that are refreshed daily.

Lumosity

This popular app was designed by scientists and game designers to make entertaining games that stretch your mental faculties.

You start out by taking a "fit test" to see how you do with some basic games and where your scores fall based on your age. The app then sends daily workouts to you that will level up in difficulty based on your skill in completing them.

You can check your dashboard to see how well you're doing and in what cognitive areas you need to improve. Lumosity has been used by over 85 million people internationally. It's free to sign up with access to limited games or a subscription with full access is \$14.95/month or \$63.96 for a year. You can also buy family and team subscriptions.

Offline Brain Games for Seniors

If you don't have access to a computer, this doesn't mean you can't play brain games. There are many games that can be played offline that are mentally stimulating.

Classic Board Games

Some board games focus just on fun game play but others require some thinking and strategy to win. Good examples are games like Clue where you need to think

through the clues to find the killer or Axis and Allies which involves creating a strategy before you start to play and following it through to win the game.

Even a game like chess, which has a very simple board and rules, can be a complex game that makes you review every move in your head to achieve victory over your opponent. Scrabble is also an excellent classic board game that actually has documented research demonstrating its positive effect on the brain.



Games on Paper

Examples of games on paper are games you can find in your daily newspaper or in booklets purchased at your local bookstore or stores like Walmart or Target. Popular games of this type include sudoku, crossword puzzles and word finder puzzles. These games all are also available on smartphones as apps, or you can find them online and print them out to work on at your leisure with a pencil and a cup of coffee.

Jigsaw Puzzles

While you can find jigsaw puzzles online, there's nothing like the traditional "physical" task of spreading all the pieces out on a table and working your way through the puzzle. It's also a fun activity you can do with others, regardless of age. Jigsaw puzzles can also range in difficulty so depending on how much of a challenge you want, you can pick an easy game with larger, fewer pieces or a difficult one with many, smaller pieces.

Trivia Games

Trivia games are a great way to test your memory as well as review topics that are of interest to you. You can also buy a trivia game like Trivial Pursuit or make your own trivia games by coming up with questions and answers to test your friends.

A trivia game is a wonderful option because it can be as complex as you want it to be and require purchasing a game board, or cost nothing by just using a pencil and some paper and your brain.

Memory Card Games

Using a deck of playing cards, you can set up a memory game that can be played by one or more people. Simply take the deck and lay the cards out, face down, in several even rows.

Flip the cards over to see what the number and suit is and then flip it back. If you're playing with someone else, take turns doing this until you start to find matching pairs. As you find a pair, flip them over and remove from the board.

The player to find the most cards wins. You can also increase the difficulty by requiring matching pairs to have different suits or colors.

Benefits of Mentally-Stimulating Mind Games for Seniors

Journal of Medicine study reported results of a study that followed the leisure activities of seniors for 20 years. One area of the study looked specifically at whether participants developed dementia.

Mentally stimulating games took into consideration those games that challenged participants to think, such as crossword puzzles, board games or cards, and other activities like reading or playing a musical instrument.

It also took into consideration the amount of physical activity in participants' lives. The results showed that those who kept both their minds and bodies active proved to be less likely to develop dementia. In fact:

- The study showed a direct (negative) correlation between the two: the more active a person was, the less likely he or she was to develop dementia.
- Those who participated in physical and mentally stimulating activities once a week reduced their risk of dementia by 7 percent.
- Those who played mind games for seniors more often and who lived a more dynamic lifestyle with activities like dancing, tennis or even walking, reduced their risk by 63 percent.

Benefits of Online Brain Games

Aside from the obvious brain-stimulating benefits that are the result of playing mind games, many game sites offer opportunities for social interaction through forums and chats. Grandparents can even stay connected with their grandkids by playing multi-

player games together, which is not only a great way to stay sharp but also an ideal way to stay connected with loved ones and/or friends.

IV. 10 Ways to Help Elderly Parents Transition to Assisted Living



Have the talk

Broaching the subject of assisted living probably won't be an easy conversation to have with your parent, but these golden rules of conversation will really help. Timing is another factor.

"When possible, I recommend adult children talk with their parents before a need arises for assisted living," says Karen Whitehead, LMSW who has a private practice in Atlanta and has been through the transition process with her own mother. Whitehead recommends using "I messages" to defuse defensive reactions. "Rather than saying,

'You can't take care of the house anymore and you're going to break a hip if you keep falling, say, 'I'm concerned about your recent falls and all of the upkeep in the house," says Whitehead.



Show empathy

The prospect of moving to an assisted living facility is a difficult scenario to imagine for your parent. Finely tuned empathy skills are necessary to truly understand this life changing event. "Your parent has been living independently, taking care of others, raising a family, and taking care of a home for their entire lives," says Julie L. Futrell, a clinical psychologist who specializes in geriatric care and the regional clinical director CHE Senior Psychological Services.

"The experience of moving to an assisted living facility is often of feeling as though one is losing their independence and becoming reliant on another. Many elderly people feel distraught at the idea of becoming a "burden" for another, and many feel great shame and an accompanying loss of dignity," notes Futrell.

Reassure your parent how valuable they are to your family. Talk about the things that will stay the same. Maybe it's the weekly card game she enjoys with the grandkids, the book club she has with friends or the cozy mittens she makes for family members at Christmas. These can all still be a part of her life in an assisted living setting.



Keep them involved

As much as possible, involve your parent in the research and tours of assisted living facilities. They may feel discouraged and disengage themselves from the process so you'll have to pull them back in by discussing amenities, location, and apartment size. With some issues you may have to take the lead—like finances. "When my mom and I were looking after a fall made it difficult for her to live alone, putting all the costs on paper really helped," says Whitehead.

"My mom could see that having someone come into her home regularly to help her was going to be more expensive in the long run and meant that she'd never be alone. In her assisted living, she has her own apartment and help when she needs it." In end Whitehead's mom decided that she would actually have more independence than if she had someone coming into stay with her.



Help with downsizing

Moving is stressful enough but when your parent also has to store or part with cherished items it adds an emotional element to the mix. Make it easier on everyone with these downsizing tips. Plan the downsizing process far in advance of the move if possible. Your parent needs plenty of time to decide what things can go or be stored and what things will be moved with them.

"Allow your parent the time to process this, reminiscing about things, and then encouraging them to look forward to this next adventure in life," recommends Futrell. "Many elderly patients find newfound freedom once they settle into an assisted living facility!"



Moving day!

It's likely you'll have the help of friends or movers on moving day. If you decide to rent a moving truck, don't forget to take a picture of this before driving off the lot. Your parent might not be involved in the physical side of moving, but it's essential to involve them in getting settled in their new home. Understand that any life-changing event or big move can leave your parent a little disoriented and sad initially," notes Futrell.

"Make sure to help your parent move, set up their new apartment/room, review all of the facility's activities with them, and remind them you are only a phone call away. This will help ease the disorientation caused by new surroundings and new people." says Futrell.



Make it a home

Decorating can be a fun way to soothe the transition into assisted living. "Encourage them to make the decisions about where things should be placed and hung," says Futrell. If you're not a pro, read this for DIY picture-hanging tips. Help her decorate her front door or patio area to make it feel like home.

"Listen attentively and keep them involved," recommends Futrell. It's all about their comfort level and style and not whether you like her furniture arrangement or choice of pictures to hang on the wall.



Expect an adjustment period

Adjusting to assisted living could be exciting, terrifying, or a little of both. Check in with the resident activities staff and let them know what kinds of activities your parent enjoys doing. It can feel isolating and lonely for your parent the first weeks, if they don't actively seek socializing.

To head off trouble, you can help your parent avoid feeling lonely with these tips. Ask if the facility has a resident who can mentor your parent and show them around, sit with them at dinner or take a class together. Whitehead recalls when her mother was a new resident and another resident invited her to sit are her table during a meal.

"Developing one friendship is often all it takes to begin to feel 'at home,'" says Whitehead. That one encounter changed everything and Whitehead's mother began to get involved more often. Whitehead's best advice? Give it time.

"When my mom first moved to her assisted living, I knew she was having a hard time adjusting because she often preferred to stay in her apartment rather than engage in activities. She would occasionally tell me she was having a tough time.

I let her know it was okay to have the feelings she had, and also let her know what a relief it was for me that she was safe," recalls Whitehead. Her mother has since fully adjusted to her new life and helps welcome and encourage the newcomers. Don't be the bad guy—these signs indicate that you might be a toxic parent.



Stay in touch and listen

During the first few weeks, plan on visiting regularly to help your parent transition into assisted living life. You'll likely hear a lot of negative things. It's crucial to validate their feelings, even if you think they're just being negative or over sensitive.

"Oftentimes, I hear children say things such as, 'It's not that bad,' or 'You're just being negative,'" says Futrell. "While it may be true, it only serves to increase the feelings of inadequacy and loneliness a parent may initially feel." Practice the nine things all good listeners do.

Encourage them to become involved in the activities the assisted living offers, but don't be too pushy. In time, they'll make friends. It's important for the parent to come to the realization that this new life isn't so bad on their own time. So while you may feel comfortable knowing they are safe and well cared for, it may take a bit longer for your parent to fully be on board.



Keep in touch with the staff

In the first weeks, check in with the staff periodically. "The staff doesn't know your parent well yet, so it's always a good idea to be present and make sure the small

things that make your parent's life feel routine and comfortable are also part of their life in the facility," suggests Futrell.

Questions about medication for example, should be clarified with the staff. And here's a list of the questions you should ask about new or changed prescriptions. Keep your parent in the loop about the details so they still feel like they have some say about their health care.



Don't be a helicopter kid

Your parent needs time to acclimate to this new living style on their own. That can be especially difficult if your parent can't effectively communicate on their own due to Alzheimer's. Resist the urge to check on them constantly or visit every day. "Allow your parent time on their own to get to know people and adjust," suggests Futrell.

"A successful transition to an assisted living facility requires that you understand that your parent often perceives such a move as indicative of their loss of independence, dignity, and virility," says Futrell.

It's normal for your parent to experience a range of emotions, both positive and negative. "Listening, being present, and allowing your parent to experience all of these emotions while also conveying how important they are to you goes a long way toward a smooth transition and to maintaining and facilitating greater happiness for your parent," says Futrell.

V. 9 Survival Tips For Moving Your Elderly Parents

Moving to a new house when you are young and in good health is stressful enough. Hence, the process is often more challenging for older people who dislike major life changes due to behavioural or health issues.

It is difficult for elderlies to leave a familiar and comfortable space, which is why many experience relocation stress syndrome and anxiety. They can also sustain injuries during this time, as statistically, 1 in 3 older Australians experience a fall every year. Falls generally occur due to hazards around their living surroundings which increase during a house move.



Therefore, if you are planning to move soon with elderly parents, seek the assistance of professional removalists in Adelaide. While the professionals manage every aspect of your move, you can care for and support your parents.

Furthermore, check these nine survival tips for moving your elderly parents without hassle or stress.

1. Communicate Effectively

Elderlies can feel a loss of control, irritation, agitation and much more when they need to move to the residence. It is justified and natural since most are extremely attached to their homes. Therefore, you must communicate to them the reasons for moving house and why it is beneficial. For example, when moving an older parent to a retirement residence or aged-care facility, explain why it is essential.

2. Allow Them Time To Process The Change

Moving out of a familiar neighbourhood and house gets challenging as you grow older. Your surroundings become your safe space which is why you must give your elderly parents ample time to prepare and plan for the transition. Even if they are not in the best mental or physical state, let them get used to the idea of relocation.

3. Involve Them In Decision Making

Avoid alienating your elderly parents during the house moving planning as it can increase their apprehension. Involve them in the process by taking the following measures.

- Look for aged care facilities, a residence in a retirement village or any other place with them.
- Take their opinion while booking professional cleaners and quality removalists in Adelaide.
- Help them declutter and pack things they want at the new residence.

4. Follow A Moving Checklist

Streamline your moving process and reduce hassle for your elderly parents by following a moving checklist. It will help prioritise work according to importance and set deadlines for timely completely. Additionally, you can change the address on time, discontinue, transfer and set up utilities, and do much more via the checklist.



5. Take Them To The New Home

The fear of the unknown can cause stress and anxiety in older people. Therefore, it is a great idea to take them to their new residence before moving. Explore the area and property with your parents while explaining the floor plans, available amenities, nearby places and other important information.

6. Pack An Essentials Bag

On the moving day, your parents should have their medicines, change of clothes, water bottle, snacks, and other important items. Pack an individual essential bag for your elderly parents to ensure smooth travel and arrival at the new home. They can keep this bag on person while their other belongings are packed and loaded on the moving truck by your hired removalists in Adelaide.

7. Visit The Doctor

Fix an appointment with your parent's doctor and visit before the move to ensure they are in good health. This step is extremely crucial if any or both of your parents suffer from a terminal or chronic ailment like diabetes, heart disease, arthritis, cancer etc. While visiting the doctor, make arrangements to transfer medical records & stock on prescription medicines as per requirement.

8. Rent A Storage Unit

If you are helping your parents move out of a family home, consider renting a storage unit to keep things of sentimental value, furniture, heirlooms, artwork etc. However, before taking this step, declutter and downsize to only pack things required at the new place.



Ask your parents to help sort the property contents to create an inventory of things to store or pack. If there is anything your parents want to give away to a friend or family member, make arrangements to send them to the correct address. The rest you can donate or resell if they are in good condition or discard responsibly.

9. Hire Quality Removalists

Moving house is physically and mentally taxing for every person involved. Delegate whatever moving-related tasks you can to have more time and energy to look after your parents. Find quality removalists in Adelaide to book a full moving service where the professionals manage the relocation from start to finish.

However, if you don't want the professionals to manage every aspect of your move, take their assistance as per requirement. Most removalists in Adelaide offer packing, local moving, interstate removal and other solutions to help you move smoothly.

Moving at any age is stressful, but it is particularly challenging for older people. However, many elderlies have to move in with their children or go to an aged-care/retirement residence due to health or other reasons. It is a significant change for them, making it a complicated process even when you take the assistance of professional removalists in Adelaide. Thus, follow the survival tips shared above to move your elderly parents without any issue.

CONCLUSION

Caregiving for an older adult in your life marks one of the most significant transitions in life—a change in roles. Once, you were the one who was on the receiving end of decisions about everything from meals, transportation, recreational activities, personal safety, medical care, and finances..

With the assumption of responsibility for elderly care, that lifelong dynamic shifts, and with that shift comes a wave of changes, both anticipated and unanticipated.

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