

Top 10 signs

Your parents need help at home

& how to talk to them about it

According to the National Alliance for Caregiving, 65.7 million individuals provide care to a loved one in need, the majority being support and care for parents ages 75 and up. But how can you tell when your aging parents may need more assistance at home?

Here are the top ten signs to watch for.

1. The yard and house lack upkeep.
2. The inside of the house is uncharacteristically cluttered, disorganized, or dirty.
3. There is a stack of unpaid bills.
4. They appear disheveled; for example, their clothes are unclean or their hygiene has declined.
5. There is hardly any food in the house.
6. There has been a change in their general mood, or they've lost interest in hobbies and activities that used to bring them joy.
7. They forget to take their medications or get prescriptions filled.
8. They have unexplained bruising, which could indicate falls.
9. They have become more forgetful, perhaps missing essential appointments.
10. They have noticeably gained or lost weight.

Getting ready for "the talk"

Even if these signs are not present today, it is important to have the tough conversations now about whether, when and how you, your siblings, and/or a home care agency should take on some or all of their care.

Breaking the ice

It's usually best to approach the conversation with a "break-the-ice" dialogue to get the lines of communication going between you and your parents. To improve communication and better understand your parents' point of view, you'll want to keep in mind:

- One of the most threatening things to a senior who has been proud to live on his or her own is the possibility of leaving home and losing independence.
- Your parents may not know that there are non-medical home care services to assist them with activities of daily living (for example, bathing and grooming) that will enable them to remain in their home safely and independently.

- A parent may be in denial and refuse to admit they need help. This will create additional challenges.

Lead with love. Saying “I love and respect you, so let’s discuss the best options that will allow you to safely stay at home. I know you will continue to thrive by living in the home you love,” is a great place to begin.

Focus on your parents’ quality of life. Let them know you’re there to protect their independence.

Share resources. Third-party information is a good source of preparedness, and can help to jumpstart the conversation with your parents. Articles, magazines, and social media are a few places to start.

CONVERSATION STARTERS

“Can I get your opinion on a couple of things, Mom?”

“I heard of a service that can send a person to help with light housekeeping for seniors. What do you think of this idea?”

“Dad, I’m really worried about you falling on the stairs; you’ve tripped a couple of times. How can I help keep you safe?”

“Mom, can we spend five minutes jotting down ideas about getting someone else to do some work in the house?”

What happens next?

The next stage is to arrange for a separate detailed conversation—a family meeting with your parents included—to discuss specifics. To avoid resentment, you will want to include all the people who care about your parents in discussions about their care.

- If possible, hold the meeting at your parents’ home or another place where they feel comfortable.
- Try to schedule the meeting at a time when most family members can attend in person. Include those who live far away by arranging a video call.
- If your parent has resisted talking about caregiving issues, consider asking a third party to help, such as a clergy member or social worker.
- Draw up a list of questions or topics in advance, including the location of your parents’ critical legal, financial, and medical documents.

MAKE CAREGIVING A FAMILY AFFAIR

It is important to discuss how to divide up the caregiving responsibilities. Speak with your family members about what kind of role they are able to and want to play.

KEEP THE COMMUNICATION GOING

Meeting with your parents and family to plan for medical, financial, and daily living needs that lie ahead, is an important step. One day, their needs will change, and you will clearly understand their wishes. Even better, you’ve drawn your family closer together so you can support each other through life’s changes.

DON’T GO IT ALONE

At SYNERGY HomeCare, we understand that people are happiest and healthiest where they are most comfortable—in their own homes. From hourly to around-the-clock care, we offer a wide range of home care services for seniors, so they can confidently live life to the fullest, wherever they call home. Whether your parents need a little help or a lot, we’re there to care.

Find out what SYNERGY HomeCare can do for you and your family.

877-432-2692