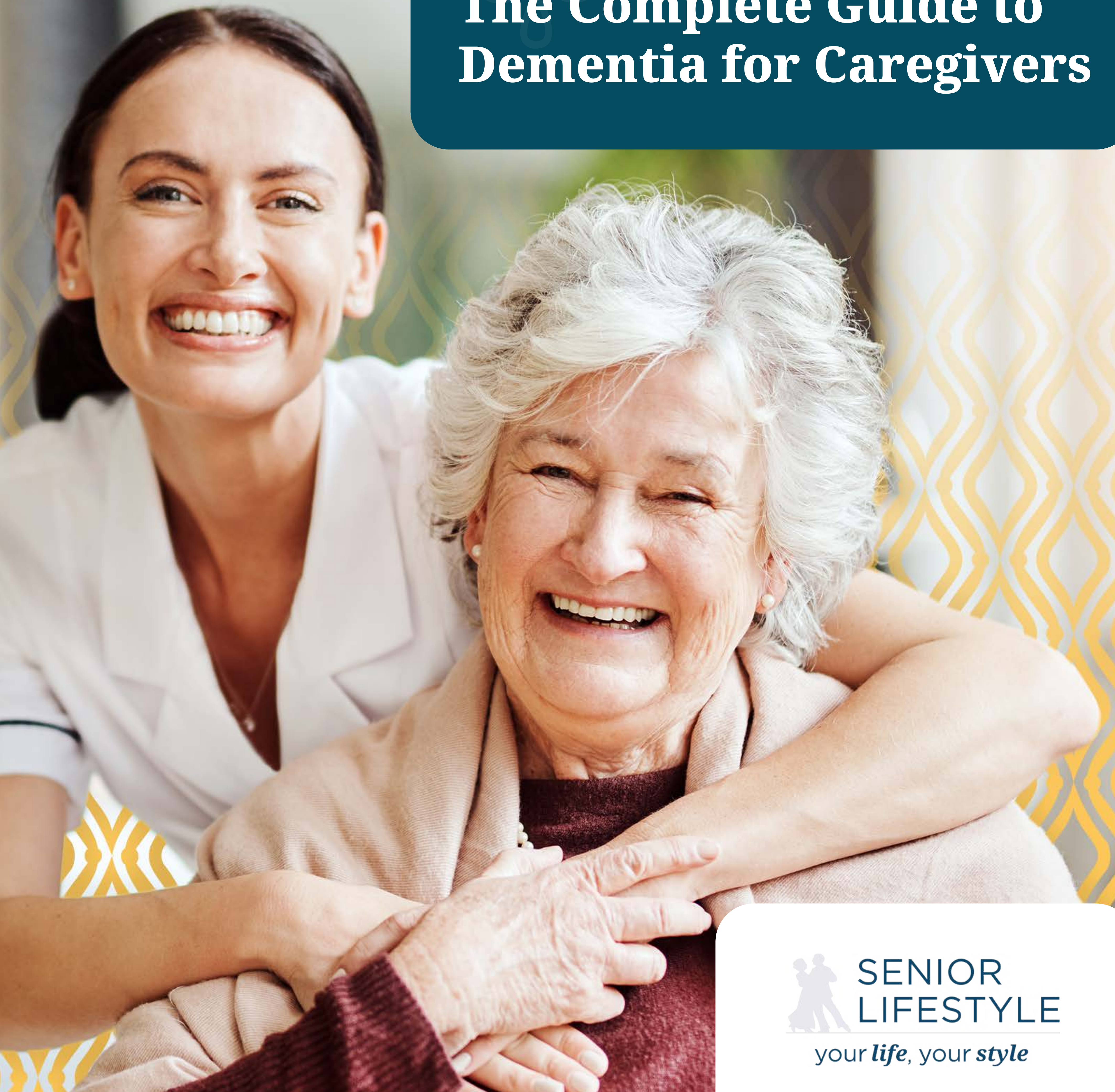


# The Complete Guide to Dementia for Caregivers



SENIOR  
LIFESTYLE

your *life*, your *style*



## ***Introduction***

For many adults, assisting an ailing parent or loved one is a challenging role reversal. Those challenges are compounded when they receive a diagnosis of dementia.

This period in life can be confusing, frustrating and exhausting for you, but imagine what it's like for your parents or loved one as their memory fades, and the simplest of tasks become challenges. Consider how frustrated he or she might feel as memory slips away.

**See 40 Resources for Adult Children Caring For Aging Parents**

**Caring for someone with dementia can become a full-time job. It's important to understand the scope of dementia and Alzheimer's, so you can provide the best care.**

**This eBook will help you prepare for caring for someone with dementia, so you can keep them healthy and safe.**

# CHAPTER 01

## *Early Warning Signs of Dementia*

Many of the early warning signs of dementia are also common symptoms of aging. To the untrained eye, it may seem like a combination of “senior moments.” When several of those symptoms are combined, with rapid onset or increasing intensity, you should arrange for a dementia screening by a neurologist as soon as possible. Here is a list of the most common early warning signs that the senior in your life may be living with dementia:

# 01

## Memory Loss and Confusion

Occasional forgetfulness is a common part of aging. Misplacing car keys happens to most adults, along with missing appointments or other low-impact memory lapses. Severe memory loss, including forgetting the names of children or important events, may occur.

# 02

## Trouble Making Plans or Solving Problems

If your loved one loses the ability of foresight, including making plans or managing finances, it could be a sign of dementia. Bills and deadlines may be frequently missed, or they may lose the ability to follow a familiar recipe.

# 03

## Forgetting How to Do Normal, Everyday Tasks

Dementia affects procedural memory, which determines task accomplishment. A person with dementia or Alzheimer's may get distracted, or lose track of what they were doing. If a senior starts having difficulty with simple acts of daily living, it could be a sign of dementia.



## Alzheimer's is the most common type of dementia

*World Health Organization and the Alzheimer's Association*

# 55 MILLION

people worldwide have Alzheimer's

More than  
**6 MILLION**

Americans live  
with dementia

# 04

## Changes in Vision

Vision tends to slip as we get older. Usually, seniors become more myopic over time, or cataracts can influence vision. When vision issues become more problematic than simple nearsightedness, it may be time to consult a professional. Dementia may affect a senior's ability to drive, judge distance or read.

# 05

## Difficulty Remembering Words or Following Conversations

If the senior in your life has difficulty conversing, something may be wrong. You may notice expressions of confusion and he or she may be unusually silent during group conversations or lose their place while talking.

# 06

## Bad Decision-Making and Poor Judgment

Dementia can affect the judgment part of a senior's brain. Look for uncharacteristic choices or strange behavior.



**ONLY 16%**

seniors receive regular cognitive assessments during routine health checkups.

*Alzheimer's Association*



# 07

## Abandoning Friends, Hobbies and/or Work

Losing the ability to participate in conversation, procedural memory loss and poor judgment may lead a senior with dementia to withdraw completely from their passions. Their meaningful hobbies, work and relationships vanish from their life.



# 08

## Unusual Moodiness and Irritability

If the senior in your life has difficulty conversing, something may be wrong. You may notice expressions of confusion and he or she may be unusually silent during group conversations or lose their place while talking.



**Find out more about  
Detecting Alzheimer's  
Symptoms and Stages**



A study says **91%** of people with cognitive impairment have not been formally diagnosed.

*National Institutes of Health*

# *The 7 Stages of Dementia*

Your loved one may exhibit several symptoms for years before they need medical intervention and regular assistance. Even if you feel strongly about their symptoms, only a doctor can diagnose dementia. If you suspect that the memory of your parents or anyone else you care for is starting to fail, schedule an appointment with a reputable neurologist right away.

**In order to care effectively for a person living with dementia you must accept the way things are; and then, introduce change into your life.**

**-Bob DeMarco, *AlzheimersReadingRoom.com***

Physicians and other dementia experts use a seven-stage scale to measure a patient's level of dementia symptoms. Below is a basic explanation of the seven stages of dementia:



# The 7 Stages of Dementia

## STAGE 01

### *No Impairment*

In the first stage of dementia, the person appears mentally healthy and functioning. In fact, anyone without a dementia diagnosis or impairment falls into Stage 1.

## STAGE 03

### *Mild Impairment*

In the third stage, the person's close friends and family members will notice a slight cognitive decline. However, a person at this stage can still live a normal life, and meet most of their own daily needs. Increasing forgetfulness, struggling to remember words and inability to concentrate are a few common symptoms of a person in Stage 3.

## STAGE 05

### *Moderately Severe Impairment*

In the fifth stage, the person will need regular help with their daily activities. In Stage 5, the person may still be able to live independently, but with some assistance. Increased memory loss and confusion will make managing their medications and routines a challenge.

## STAGE 07

### *Very Severe Impairment*

In the last stage of dementia, the person will lose the ability to speak, smile, eat or even walk. A person experiencing late-stage dementia will no longer have awareness of his or her surroundings. They will be fully dependent on others for all of their needs, including nourishment, bathing and toileting. Because of the level of care necessary, the families of late-stage dementia patients often turn to professional help to get through this difficult time.

## STAGE 02

### *Very Mild Impairment*

In the second stage, the person exhibits some normal signs of aging. For example, they may misplace glasses, but can quickly recover them. A person in Stage 2 would not be diagnosed with dementia.

## STAGE 04

### *Moderate Impairment*

In the fourth stage, the person will have a hard time completing familiar tasks. For example, they may lose the ability to cook a meal, and their short-term memory may start to fail. Incontinence and avoiding socialization are common in Stage 4. At this point, a doctor can detect signs of cognitive decline through a patient exam.

## STAGE 06

### *Severe Impairment*

In the sixth stage, the person will need a lot of help with routine daily tasks, such as getting dressed and using the toilet. As the senior in your care experiences an increasing mental decline, he or she may wander off and become lost. They may recognize loved ones but not be able to remember their names. Due to changes in sleep patterns and the possibility of paranoia or hallucinations, living alone may become dangerous in Stage 6.

**Find out When Is the Right Time to Consider Memory Care?**





### *The Dangers and Hazards of Dementia Caregiving*

As senior dementia symptoms progress, you must take extra precautions to keep everyone in the house safe, including yourself. You may notice them losing balance or coordination. They will become confused and disoriented more easily. Their judgment may become impaired. For all of these reasons and more, you and all other caregivers must agree on how to restrict their activities and find ways to keep them calm.

# 01

## The Hazard of Household Items

Kitchen knives, power tools and dangerous chemicals are just a few household items that should be kept out of reach of someone with dementia.

Store unloaded firearms in locked cabinets and safes. No matter how adept they used to be at shooting, allowing a dementia patient access to weapons is just not worth the risk. Due to dementia's impact on the brain, they could mishandle the weapon and hurt someone. In the case of agitation or confusion, you cannot risk the possibility of a gun being used in anger.

Aggressive behavior is rare with dementia patients, but it's just good practice to protect them and yourself from potential injury.

# 02

## Wandering and Confusion

Wandering is a common symptom of dementia. Six out of 10 dementia patients will wander, due to disorientation and confusion. Dementia patients may forget their own address and feel the need to return to a once-familiar location, such as a former workplace.

Preventing a senior from leaving on their own is a critical part of your job as their caregiver.

# 03

## Paranoia or Agitation in the Evening

Sundowner's syndrome is a condition where dementia patients become paranoid or agitated in the afternoon and evening hours. As the patient becomes increasingly fatigued and frustrated throughout the day, these feelings can culminate in irritability and fear later in the day.

**Read [Understanding Sundowner's Syndrome in People with Dementia](#)**

Some experts believe that the lack of sunlight at night is a trigger, and that nighttime shadows in the house can be frightening. If someone in your care begins to exhibit sundowner's syndrome, ask their doctor to review their medications to better manage these symptoms. Discourage late-afternoon napping, and find ways to comfort and calm them in the evening hours. Closing the curtains, turning as many lights as possible and playing familiar music at night can help.



# 16 MILLION

More than 16 million Americans provide unpaid care for people with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia.

# 18.5 B

These caregivers provided an estimated 18.5 billions hours of care.

*National Institutes of Health*

### *Signs of Caregiver Burnout*

If you have been providing daily care for your loved one for some time, you may begin to feel burned out. It can be hard to tell the difference between depression and caregiver burnout, because the symptoms are so similar. You play a critical role in their life, but you must also take the time to care for your own health.

Here are some signs that you might be experiencing caregiver burnout:

# 01

## Exhaustion

Physical, emotional and/or mental drain are common among caregivers. When you spend all of your time and energy caring for a loved one, it's easy to neglect acts of self-care. To keep up with your new demanding routine, it's important to eat a balanced diet, stay hydrated and get regular exercise. If your senior is able, try walking with them every day. If that means pushing them around the block in their wheelchair, the fresh air and sunshine could do a world of good for both of you.

# 02

## Disruption of Sleep Habits

Caring for someone with dementia may cause a drastic change in your sleep patterns. Whether it's a significant increase or decrease, your body is telling you something is wrong. Pay attention to the signals from your body, and give it what it needs.

# 03

## Changes in Appetite

You may experience changes in your appetite, perhaps accompanied by weight gain or loss. It can feel impossible to keep your own health and fitness on track when you are focused on keeping up with someone else's care. Preparing and sharing healthy meals with your loved one is a good habit to embrace.



# 04

## Despair, Hopelessness or Sadness

Caregivers may experience feelings of hopelessness, despair or sadness. These feelings are often caused by unrealistic expectations for the other person's condition. When you are providing care for someone with a progressive disease, it's important to remember that no matter how much love and effort you give, you must maintain realistic expectations of their condition. Taking the situation personally and considering it a failure on your part is not fair to you, and it can be emotionally exhausting.



# 05

## Frequency of Illness

Care for someone with dementia may cause you more frequent illnesses. Increased physical and emotional exertion paired with poor diet and lack of sleep could weaken your immune system. Overworked caregivers are much **more likely to get sick** than people working reasonable hours.



# 06

## Withdrawing from Friends, Hobbies and Passions

Caregivers may withdraw from friends, hobbies and other interests. Exhaustion can have many effects on mood and could lead caregivers to abandon the pastimes that give their lives meaning. If you're never in the mood for things that once made you happy, it may be time to enlist some additional help.

# 07

## Escalating Frustration

When you're under intense pressure, your frustrations may escalate to a breaking point. Some caregivers even have thoughts of hurting themselves, or the person they care for. This is a huge indication that it's time to take a step back and take care of yourself.

**See Infographic: Tips for Adult Children Caring for Aging Parents**

The psychological toll of providing long-term dementia care can be devastating. If you feel like your frustration is getting out of hand, reach out for support before someone gets hurt. If there are no other family members to help out, a senior living community may be the healthiest choice for you and the senior in your life.



About

**16 MILLION**

adult family caregivers care for someone who has Alzheimer's disease or other dementia.

*Alzheimer's Association*

**57%**

of working adult caregivers said responsibilities impacted their working hours.

**18%**

of working adult caregivers had to go to part time,

**16%**

had to take a leave of absence, and

**8%**

turned down a promotion due to caregiving.

**1 in 6**

More than 1 in 6 had to quit work entirely.

*Alzheimer's Impact Movement*

# *The Real Costs of Dementia Care*

Many dementia patients prefer to stay in their own homes as long as possible. Remaining indoors can provide tremendous comfort to your loved one. Because dementia is a progressive neurological condition, eventually they may require a level of care that exceeds what can be expected of you.

Even trained home health aides have limits to what they can do for dementia patients. There is a good chance that you may eventually have to consider moving your parent to a Memory Care community.



## Is Memory Care Cost-Prohibitive?

Many think retirement communities are too costly, but it's important to understand the full scope of services when considering a community. For example, combining utility bills and removing the costs of maintaining a home can actually make a retirement community a more affordable option than living alone.

At **Senior Lifestyle**, we ensure healthy meals for our residents, and plenty of opportunities for socializing. For caregivers such as yourself, these communities can be a tremendous source of relief. You can rest easy knowing that your loved one is being cared for by Memory Care professionals. You can get back to your family, passions, and social life without the stress of being solely responsible for their health and safety.

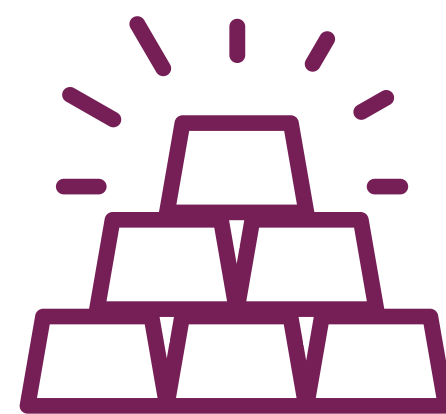
[Learn about 50 Essential Dementia Resources](#)



The value of unpaid caregiving in 2017

**exceeded**

the value of paid home care and total Medicaid spending.



The value of services provided by informal caregivers has steadily increased over the last decade, with an estimated economic value of:

**\$470 B**  
(2017)

**\$450 B**  
(2009)

**\$375 B**  
(2007)



The economic value of the care provided by unpaid caregivers of those with Alzheimer's disease or other dementias was

**\$470 B**

in 2017.

AARP



## CHAPTER 06

### ***Rightsizing for Memory Care***

Downsizing, or rightsizing, for the senior in your life can be an overwhelming task. Relocating has many crucial steps, and thinking of the event as one huge task can be daunting.

The trick to tackling a massive undertaking is to divide the task into several small tasks. Organizing the downsize into manageable bits will make the process more stress-free for you, and the senior in your life.

# We've created this downsizing checklist, to make everyone's life easier.

## PLANNING

- Clean and organize in stages
- Set a hard moving date
- Measure furniture
- Plan an estate sale
- Hire a moving company or ask friends and family

## SORTING

- Choose what is important to keep
- Identify what is sellable
- Select what goes to friends and family
- Decide what is donated or thrown away

## PACKING

- Get organized
- Identify fragile and important items
- Invite friends and family to help

## MOVING

- If using friends and family, be sure to communicate
- Make sure you have the appropriate gear and muscle
- If using a moving company, get contracts in writing

## THE NEW LIFE

- Update to the new address
- Unpack essentials, then bathroom, then bedroom
- Check in regularly

Rightsizing a senior's residence is a challenge. If you feel out of your depth, or overwhelmed by the challenge of moving, sometimes you need an expert to help out. **Use our interactive map** to find senior living communities in your area. You can schedule an appointment to meet with Senior Lifestyle staff and talk through any concerns you may have with rightsizing.

For information on ongoing care, and enriching the lives of seniors, be sure to read our **Senior Lifestyle Blog**.

## CHAPTER 07

# *Memory Care Community Options*

Memory Care communities have a lot to offer your loved one. Many of these communities are staffed by professionals who can bring out the best in your parents or partner. With proper care, this time can be fulfilling, enriching and enjoyable.

**Senior Lifestyle's Memory Care communities** offer residents a wide range of amenities and services. Our award-winning “embrace” Memory Care program ensures top-tier personal care and safety for all residents. We provide a comforting rhythm, with a daily routine that provides support and reassurance for seniors. The “embrace” Memory Care program provides a holistic approach to improve their physical, emotional and social health.

### **Read Understanding Our Approach to Dementia Care**

You don't have to handle this challenging time alone. If you want to **learn more information**, Senior Lifestyle is available to consult with you about your Memory Care needs. **Complete our contact form today**, and a team member will contact you shortly.

