senior review

FREE

November 2026

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November is Home Care/ Hospice Care, Alzheimer's and Dementia Care Month



A Senior Magazine for Living a Healthier, Smarter and More Active Life in Rock County

It Really Does Mean Giving Thanks

By Dave Olson, Realtor®, SRES™ RE/MAX EXCEL



November brings cold, gray days, barren trees, stripped of their Fall glory and the in between month before we get the harsh winter weather. For early settlers in what was to become our United States, it meant the end of the harvest season and a time to store away as much harvested crops for the long time between the harvest season and next year's bounty. History books list the first Thanksgiving feast to have occurred in 1621 in the Plymouth settlement. The settlers were here seeking freedom to practice their religion without persecution from the state-run Church of England.

Most of us were taught that the Thanksgiving feast that year was a new tradition thanking God for what he gave them here in this New World. Their puritan beliefs and Old English Saxon traditions included festivals held in the fall going further back in England and Europe. These festivals were held to give thanks for divine provision and were refined to honor God after the English reformation. Pilgrims were more likely to follow traditions and cultural norms they had grown up with, just as we do today.

Regardless of how that first Thanksgiving came to be, presidents George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Franklin Roosevelt all formalized our Thanksgiving Day to make it an annual day to give Thanks and created a national holiday for that sole purpose.

Fast forward to today: We gather our families for a big meal featuring a big Turkey, stuffing, potatoes and gravy, cranberries, marshmallow sweet potatoes and all the fixings. Don't forget about the Pumpkin and Pecan pies, even though most of us are as stuffed as the Turkey by then!

There's always a football game each year and the jolly laughter and conversations that happen when families gather. It's the fun beginning of the "Black Friday" shopping weekend for some, while others like me will be out in the woods hoping for that big buck to show himself.

This year please take some time to think about all that you really have to be thankful for and truly give thanks for your many blessings. Counting your blessings and being grateful have been linked to healthier lives, better mental health and longer lifespans. Our country is extremely blessed, and we have luxuries that Kings never dreamt of in days gone by. We get to take the day off, and our homes are warm and safe, we have so much food we can't eat all of it, and we have the ones we love to share it with. We have the freedom to gather and the privilege to worship God without fear, and the leisure time to watch that game, go out shopping or head into the woods. We can gather our loved ones around us and simply enjoy each other's company. We really do have it made, don't we?

I wish a most BLESSED and Happy Thanksgiving to all of you. I'm grateful and thankful for each of YOU.

balanced living

Tips and ideas for a healthy and balanced life

SMART *and* SWEET

White sugar can raise your risk for heart disease and cause your blood sugar to spike, then crash. But you don't need to go without! Instead, go natural with one of these four options - less fructose and more nutritional benefits.

1. DATE SYRUP Full of fiber, it also offers inflammation-fighting and mood-lifting health perks. Add a dash of it to ease up spicy dishes.

2. MAPLE SYRUP We're talking "100% pure organic" to score essential minerals like thyroid-boosting manganese. Add 1 to 2 tablespoons to balance out any bitterness in a vinegary salad dressing, and sub 3/4 cup for every cup of sugar when baking - just be sure to reduce other liquids by about a quarter too.

3. COCONUT SUGAR Sub in one cup of these caramel-colored crystals for one cup white sugar to whip up baked goods that promote a happy tum, courtesy of the good bacteria from coconut's star fiber, inulin.



4. HONEY It's heart-healthy antioxidant and antibacterial properties (which make it great for soothing soar throats) are destroyed by too much heat, so skip it in baked goods. Instead, use it in drinks and on fruit.

.195 SECOND

That's how long it takes for you to think about whether that chocolate cake is healthy after your first thought, which is always about taste, according to a study in Psychological Science. Researchers say you can overcome your natural gimme impulse by waiting a second longer to weigh the pros and cons of that cake before throwing it down the hatch.



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Call Karen to register at 608/921-7165

Edgerton Public Library – 101 Albion St., Edgerton
3rd Wednesday of each month • 11am-12:30pm
Call the library to register at 608/884-4511

SUPPORT GROUPS

Janesville Evening Support Group
3rd Tuesday of each month 5:30-7pm
Oak Park Place - 700 Myrtle Way, Janesville

Sun Valley Support Group
2nd & 4th Tuesday of each month 1-3pm
1650 Sun Valley Dr, Beloit

Support Squad
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For more information or to make an in-person consultation appointment, please contact Karen at 608/921-7165 or karen.tennyson@co.rock.wi.us

Managing Holiday Stress and Loneliness

Holidays are often portrayed as a time of joy, family gatherings, and celebration. However, this time of year can also bring feelings of loneliness, stress, and sadness, especially for older adults. The loss of a spouse or friends, family living far away, health changes, or difficulty participating in familiar traditions can make the holidays feel different than they once did.

If the holidays are difficult for you, remember that you are not alone, and it is okay if this season looks different than it has in the past.

Make Room for New Traditions
Holiday traditions can change over time, and that is okay. Instead of trying to recreate the past, consider starting a new tradition that fits your current lifestyle. This might mean hosting a smaller gathering, enjoying a quiet holiday meal, watching a favorite movie, or spending time with a friend. Meaningful moments do not have to be big or elaborate.

Stay Connected
Social connections can make a difference during the holiday season. Accept invitations when you feel up to it, enjoy a cup of coffee with a neighbor, call an old friend, or attend an activity at your local senior center. Even small interactions can help you feel more connected.
If family members live far away, consider scheduling regular phone or video calls throughout the holiday season rather than waiting until the holiday itself.

Take Care of Yourself
The busy holiday season can disrupt everyday routines. Try to maintain regular sleep and meal schedules, stay physically active, and get outside during daylight hours when possible. A short walk, listening to music, or spending time on a favorite hobby can help improve your mood and provide a welcome break from holiday demands.

It is also okay to simplify your holiday plans. You do not have to do everything you have always done. Give yourself permission to set boundaries and focus on what matters most to you.



How Family and Friends Can Help
If you have an older loved one who may be feeling lonely, reach out regularly throughout the season. Ask what would make the holidays meaningful for them instead of assuming they want to continue the same traditions. Include them in planning, offer to help with activities that have become difficult, and remember that a simple phone call or visit can mean a great deal.

Recognize When You Need Extra Support
Feeling sad or lonely at times is a normal part of life, especially during periods of change or loss. However, if you notice ongoing sadness, withdrawal from activities you usually enjoy, or changes in your sleep or appetite, consider talking with your healthcare provider.

Remember, the holidays do not have to be perfect to be meaningful. Give yourself permission to celebrate in ways that feel right for you. A little connection, a new tradition, or a quiet moment of enjoyment can make the season brighter.











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Caring For An Elderly Veteran Requires Attention Not Only To Physical Health

Caring for an elderly veteran requires attention not only to physical health, but also to the psychological and emotional dimensions shaped by military service. Many older veterans carry experiences from combat, deployment, or military culture that can resurface later in life—particularly as aging, illness, or cognitive decline reduce coping reserves. A comprehensive care plan must integrate geriatric principles with trauma-informed mental health support.



Recognize Late-Life Mental Health Risks
Older veterans are at increased risk for depression, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and social isolation. According to the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, PTSD does not always resolve with age; in some cases, symptoms intensify during retirement, bereavement, or medical decline. Cognitive disorders such as dementia can also amplify past trauma, leading to agitation, nightmares, or paranoia.

Caregivers should monitor for warning signs: withdrawal from activities, changes in sleep or appetite, irritability, increased alcohol use, expressions of hopelessness, or confusion that seems trauma-linked. Any mention of self-harm warrants immediate professional evaluation.

Use Trauma-Informed Communication
Military culture often emphasizes stoicism and self-reliance. Elderly veterans may minimize distress or resist help. Approach conversations with respect for autonomy and service history. Avoid sudden loud noises or unexpected physical contact, which may trigger hypervigilance. When discussing care decisions, frame support as a strategy to preserve independence rather than remove it.

Open-ended questions—"How have you been sleeping?" or "What's been weighing on you lately?"—are more effective than direct confrontation. Listening without judgment builds trust and encourages disclosure.

Coordinate Professional Support
Primary care providers should routinely screen for depression and PTSD in older veterans. The Veterans Health Administration offers geriatric mental health services, telehealth counseling, and specialty clinics for aging veterans. Evidence-based therapies, such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and medication management, can significantly reduce symptoms even in advanced age.

In crisis situations, caregivers can contact the Veterans Crisis Line by calling 988 and pressing 1 for immediate support.

Address Social Isolation and Purpose
Retirement, mobility limitations, and the loss of peers can intensify loneliness. Structured social engagement is protective. Encourage participation in veteran groups, faith communities, or local senior programming. Some communities host veteran-specific gatherings through organizations such as the American Legion, which can provide camaraderie and identity continuity.

Daily routines are equally important. Consistent sleep schedules, regular meals, light physical activity, and meaningful tasks—such as mentoring younger family members or volunteering—support emotional stability.

Manage Cognitive Decline with Sensitivity
If dementia is present, trauma memories may surface unpredictably. Maintain calm, clear communication and avoid arguing about perceived threats. Redirect attention gently and ensure the environment feels secure. Good lighting, minimized clutter, and reduced background noise can lower agitation.

Support the Caregiver
Caring for an elderly veteran with mental health needs can be demanding. Family caregivers should seek respite services, counseling, or caregiver support programs offered through the VA or community agencies. Sustaining the caregiver's well-being directly affects the veteran's quality of care.

Ultimately, effective care for an elderly veteran integrates medical oversight, psychological awareness, structured routine, and social connection. With trauma-informed practices and coordinated support, families can help aging veterans maintain dignity, emotional stability, and a meaningful quality of life.





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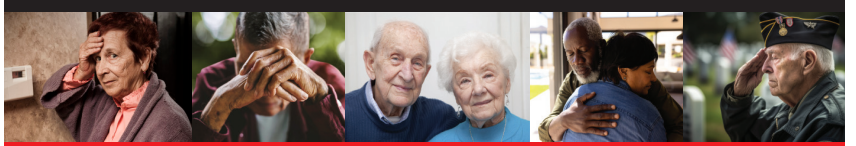


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Planning Ahead Can Make Home Care Easier

For many families, the conversation about home care begins only after something happens. A parent falls, comes home from the hospital, or suddenly has difficulty managing everyday tasks. In the middle of a crisis, families are then left trying to figure out what kind of help is needed, who will provide it and how everyone will share the responsibility.



Planning ahead can make that conversation much easier.

Home care can mean different things depending on a person's needs. Some older adults may need help with meals, errands, housekeeping or transportation. Others may need assistance with bathing, dressing, toileting or mobility. More complex situations may require skilled nursing or other specialized care.

The first step is talking with your loved one before a crisis occurs. Ask what they would want if they eventually needed assistance at home. Would they prefer to remain in their current home? What kinds of help would they be comfortable accepting? Having these conversations while everyone is healthy enough to participate can help prevent disagreements later.

It is also important for families to decide who will handle different responsibilities. One family member might help with medical appointments, while another handles finances or home maintenance. Another may be available for transportation or regular check-ins. Dividing responsibilities early can prevent one person from unexpectedly becoming the primary caregiver.

Pay attention to changes in your loved one's physical, mental and emotional well-being. A single forgetful day does not necessarily signal a serious problem. Instead, look for patterns. Changes in personality, mobility, hygiene, eating habits or the ability to manage normal household responsibilities may indicate that additional support is needed.

Families should also gather important information before it becomes difficult to access. Keep a list of doctors, medications, insurance information, emergency contacts and financial resources. Discuss important legal documents, including a Medical Power of Attorney and an advance directive. These documents can help ensure that your loved one's wishes are understood and respected if they are unable to make decisions for themselves.

Finally, remember that a home-care plan is not a one-time decision. Needs can change after an illness, injury or hospitalization. A person who needs only occasional assistance today may require more support later.

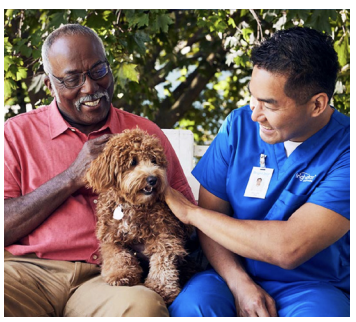
Planning does not mean giving up independence. In many cases, it can help an older adult remain safely at home for as long as possible while giving family members greater peace of mind.

The best time to talk about future care is usually before you need it. Starting the conversation now gives everyone a chance to be heard, make informed decisions and prepare for whatever comes next.

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Why It Helps to Call Hospice Sooner *by Beloit Regional Hospice*



Many people have the wrong idea about hospice. Some think it's only for the last few days of life. Others believe choosing hospice means "giving up," or that hospice will take away medicines, treatments, or the ability to make your own choices. None of this is true. Because so many people believe these ideas, families often don't call until a crisis, when little time is left to benefit from hospice care.

Hospice is about helping people live as fully and comfortably as possible while they face a serious illness that can't be cured. The sooner hospice gets involved, the more time the team has to learn what matters most to the patient and family, get ahead of pain and other symptoms, answer questions, and support everyone involved.

Hospice can ease pain, trouble breathing, worry, upset stomach, weakness, and other symptoms, wherever the patient feels most at home. Nurses, aides, social workers, chaplains, and volunteers work together, offering emotional, spiritual, and everyday support to patients and caregivers. No one should do this alone.

"Choosing hospice earlier isn't about giving up—it's about gaining support," Melissa Salaam, MSN, RN, Director of Hospice and Transitional Care at Beloit Regional Hospice said. "Hospice provides much more than care in the final days of life. Being on hospice care sooner allows patients and families to benefit from expert symptom management, nursing support, social work, spiritual care, aide services, medication and equipment coordination, caregiver education, and emotional support throughout the journey."

Starting earlier gives families time to learn what to expect, prepare for changes, and plan before an emergency happens. Knowing who to call eases fear and uncertainty, and it may help avoid unwanted emergency room trips or hospital stays.

"The goal isn't simply more time on hospice—it's more meaningful time," Salaam said. "When patients have the opportunity to receive hospice support earlier, we can focus on comfort, relationships, symptom management, caregiver support, and quality of life rather than waiting until a crisis occurs."

Asking about hospice or meeting with the team does not mean you have to sign up. A visit is a chance to ask questions, learn what hospice offers, and decide whether and when it is right for you. You stay in charge, with no pressure and no commitment.

Reaching out early gives patients something important: time. Time to understand their choices, decide what they want, get extra help, and spend time with the people they love.

If you or someone you love is living with a serious illness, you don't need all the answers right now. Sometimes the most important first step is simply starting the conversation.



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Recognizing the Signs: When Is Memory Care the Right Choice?

By Cambridge Senior Living

Occasional forgetfulness can be a normal part of aging. Misplacing keys, forgetting a name, or walking into a room and wondering why you went there can happen to anyone as we age. But when changes in memory, judgment, or behavior begin interfering with everyday life, they may signal something more significant.



Understanding the warning signs—and knowing what memory care provides—can help families make informed decisions before a crisis occurs.

What Is Memory Care?
Memory care is specialized residential care designed for people living with Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and other conditions affecting memory and cognitive function. While memory care communities provide many of the same services as assisted living, they typically offer additional structure, security, supervision, and caregivers trained to support individuals experiencing cognitive decline.

The goal is to create an environment where residents can maintain as much independence, purpose, and quality of life as possible while receiving the support they need.

Warning Signs to Watch For
Memory loss alone does not necessarily mean someone needs memory care. Instead, consider how cognitive changes are affecting the person's safety and ability to manage everyday life.

One important warning sign is **increasing difficulty with daily tasks.** Someone who previously managed medications, prepared meals, paid bills, or kept appointments may begin making frequent mistakes or forgetting these responsibilities.

Safety concerns are particularly important. Leaving the stove on, becoming lost while driving or walking, forgetting to lock doors, or wandering away from home can indicate that independent living is becoming unsafe.

Changes in **personal care** can also be significant. A person may begin wearing the same clothing repeatedly, neglecting bathing or grooming, forgetting to eat, or struggling to maintain their home.

Families should also watch for **changes in behavior or personality.** Increased confusion, anxiety, agitation, suspicion, withdrawal, or changes in sleep patterns may accompany dementia.

Another consideration is the impact on family caregivers. When a spouse or adult child must provide nearly constant supervision, frequently miss work, or remain awake at night because of safety concerns, it may be time to consider additional support.

Starting the Conversation Early
Families do not need to wait for an emergency to explore memory care. If you notice concerning changes, consider beginning with a medical evaluation. Memory problems can have many causes, and some may be treatable.

It can also be helpful to tour memory care communities before a move becomes necessary. Ask about caregiver training, safety measures, activities, dining, healthcare coordination, and how care changes as a resident's needs progress.

Choosing memory care is a significant decision, but it does not have to mean giving up independence. At the right time, the right environment can provide something equally important: **safety, meaningful engagement, companionship, and greater peace of mind for the entire family.**

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Staying Home in Rock County: What Local Families Are Learning About Care *by Cornerstone Caregiving*

Ask almost any older adult in Janesville where they want to grow old, and the answer is the same: home. The house where the kids grew up. The neighborhood where you know which sidewalks buckle and which neighbors shovel early. Home is more than an address. It's the life you built.



But somewhere between a hospital discharge, a fall on the ice, or a spouse who can't manage the caregiving alone anymore, families across Rock County run into the same hard question. How do we make staying home actually work?

The real question is "when is it time?"
Most families don't call a home care agency because they read a brochure. They call because something happened. Dad left the stove on. Mom is skipping meals. The daughter who's been driving over from Milton three times a week is running on empty. If any of that sounds familiar, you're not behind. You're right on time.

You're not alone in your hesitation, either. One of our Wisconsin clients, a self-described "fiercely independent" 76-year-old recovering from brain surgery, put it plainly:

> *"I didn't think I needed at-home care. I'm fiercely independent and didn't want people in the house. What would I do with them? I was wrong... I found all the caregivers capable, respectful and compassionate. They never hovered but were close when it was needed."* – Leslie J., Cornerstone Caregiving client, Middleton, WI

This is what surprises most people. Good home care doesn't take independence away. It protects it.

Why November matters here
There's a reason this conversation belongs in a Wisconsin winter issue. Falls are the leading cause of injury for older adults, and icy driveways, dark afternoons, and long stretches of isolation make the risk worse. Not just physically, but emotionally. A caregiver who handles the errands, keeps meals regular, and provides steady company between Thanksgiving and spring thaw can be the difference between an older adult who merely gets through winter and one who genuinely enjoys it. For one Green Bay family, that support came at just the right moment:

> *"They were able to provide us coverage with just a few days' notice and gave us peace of mind while we were out of town... Our mom was never without care. Thank you for taking care of our mom and for making our lives a little easier."* – Rebecca P., family member of a client, Green Bay, WI

Caring for the caregiver, too
Rock County families know this well. The person who needs help isn't always the one receiving care. Often it's the adult daughter, the retired spouse, or the son juggling work in Beloit and evening check-ins in Janesville. Family caregiving is an act of love, but it is also exhausting. Respite care exists so that love doesn't burn out.

> *"Becoming my father-in-law's full-time caregiver was beginning to take a major toll on me mentally and financially. Having this support has not only given us a much-needed break, but truly helped us avoid burnout and allowed me to get back to my own work."*
> – Amy Jo, family caregiver, Eau Claire, WI

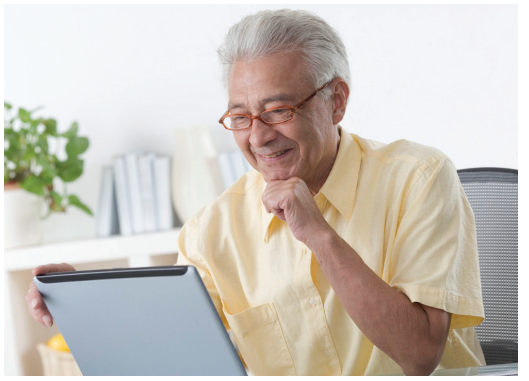
What home care looks like, practically
In-home care is non-medical support built around your routine rather than an institution's schedule. That means help with bathing and dressing, meal preparation, medication reminders, light housekeeping, rides to appointments, overnight supervision, and companionship. Care can range from a few hours a week to around-the-clock. A good care plan should also flex as your needs change, whether that's recovery after a hospital stay, ongoing support for dementia, or extra hands during hospice. Many families are surprised to learn that long-term care insurance and VA benefits can help cover the cost.

Start with a conversation, not a commitment
If your family is circling this decision, start small and ask questions. A reputable agency will offer a free, no-obligation assessment in your home, explain costs plainly, and never pressure you into more care than you need. The goal is the same one our client in Middleton discovered after her surgery: staying safely, comfortably, and independently in the home you love.

Cornerstone Caregiving's Janesville office serves families throughout Rock County, including Janesville, Milton, Edgerton, Evansville, and Beloit, with care available up to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. To learn more or schedule a free in-home assessment, visit CornerstoneCaregiving.com or call our Janesville office at (608) 530-0585.



Technology Resources *By the GWAAR Legal Services Team*



Technology is useful when it works and you know how to use it. Learning to use technology can take some time and be frustrating. There are many organizations that offer free help with technology issues. Many public benefits, medical providers, and social programs use technology to allow access to a broader audience. Understanding how to use technology can ease anxiety around its use and allow you to stay connected. Below are a few places to go for help when you're trying to use technology that isn't cooperating.

Public Libraries
Many of the public libraries in Wisconsin have not only technology available for you to use, but may offer classes or one-on-one tech support. They may have classes available to help you learn how to use the internet, a laptop, or even your smartphone. Some even offer time slots to meet with someone to walk through technology issues. If you don't have internet or a computer, you can use theirs for free. Call or visit your local library to see what technology support they offer.

United Way
United Way offers a program called Techquity that focuses on developing digital skills, tech support, and connecting individuals with technology and the internet. They have navigators available to help one-on-one with technology issues like setting up the internet. They can troubleshoot technology issues and help walk you through issues. They also help connect people with low-cost internet access and laptop computers. Find a navigator near you at https://www.techquitywi.org/digital-navigator or look up more information about this program at https://www.techquitywi.org/.

Cell Phone Providers
If you have issues with your cell phone, you should call or visit your cell phone provider. They are there to help with technical issues and to answer your questions. They can walk you through issues and help solve problems related to your cell phone or cell phone service.

AARP
AARP offers free online classes on a variety of topics. They offer classes about technology. You can learn about online safety, online scams, cell phones, and artificial intelligence, or AI. Once you learn more about technology and get comfortable with it, you can take other online classes like a stretch class or join an online discussion on aging. You can find a class on SeniorPlanet at https://seniorplanet.org/classes?page=1.

Cyber-Seniors
Cyber-Seniors is an online nonprofit organization that offers technology support and online classes. This organization offers one-on-one technology support phone calls. They also provide online classes to help update technology skills. To learn more about this organization go to https://cyberseniors.org/.

Utilize these free technology resources to solve technology issues and build your technology skills. Understanding technology will help you stay connected and ensure that you use technology safely. Build confidence using technology to utilize telehealth appointments, request prescription refills online, sign up and manage health benefits on your cell phone, pay bills online, learn something new in an online class, and connect with loved ones or new friends online.

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How to Communicate With a Loved One Who Has Dementia

By Oak Park Place

Dementia can affect much more than memory. It may also change a person's ability to find words, follow a conversation, interpret their surroundings and explain what they need. As communication becomes more difficult, changing your approach can reduce frustration and help your loved one feel safe, respected and understood.

Start With a Calm Environment
Turn down the television, limit competing conversations and approach the person from the front. Make eye contact, speak at eye level and use a warm, relaxed tone.

A gentle greeting before offering assistance can make the interaction feel less surprising or threatening.

Keep Words and Choices Simple
Focus on one idea at a time. Instead of asking an open-ended question such as, "What would you like to wear today?" offer two choices: "Would you like the blue sweater or the green sweater?"

When a task has several steps, break it into smaller actions and demonstrate what you mean.

Give Them Time to Respond
Allow extra time for the person to process your words and respond. When something is not understood, try rephrasing it rather than repeating it more loudly.



Listen for the feeling behind the words, especially when the details do not seem accurate.

The Most Important Rule: Do Not Argue, Correct or Test Their Memory
Proving that a loved one is mistaken will not bring comfort. Instead, correcting or testing their memory may increase embarrassment, fear, frustration or confusion.

Rather than focusing on whether the details are accurate, acknowledge the emotion behind their words, offer reassurance and gently guide the conversation.

For example, if your loved one says: "I need to get ready for the party."

Avoid responding, "There is no party." Instead, explore what the idea means to them:



"You're excited about getting together with everyone. Tell me about the party."

You can then gently redirect the conversation toward a comforting memory:

"Tell me about some of your favorite parties"

The goal is not to win an argument or force someone back into your reality. The goal is to help them feel safe, heard and supported.

Focus on Connection, Not Perfect Conversation
Meaningful communication is not always about getting every fact right. It is about preserving dignity, reducing fear and creating connection.

Familiar music, photographs, prayers, stories and everyday routines can provide additional ways to engage when words become difficult.

Communication Begins With Knowing the Person
At Oak Park Place, our memory care teams take time to understand each resident's history, preferences and routines. That knowledge helps us communicate with greater patience, compassion and purpose. Learn More at OakParkPlace.com

Get one-on-one help with your Medicare questions

I'm Ronni Hill, a licensed sales agent in southern Wisconsin. When it comes to Medicare, it's important to consider all of your options. What works well for your neighbor may not be the best fit for you. I know the ins and outs of Medicare, and I'm ready to answer your questions and help you find a plan that fits your needs.

Call today to learn more about Medicare Advantage plans in your area



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