

Tips for Moving Your Loved One to Friendship House

Moving into Friendship House will take some planning and consideration. Residents with dementia often have difficulties such as short term memory loss, confusion and limited coping skills. Some general information and tips may be helpful for a smooth transition. The following questions are those which are most commonly asked by families and which you may also find helpful in your preparation for a successful move.

**Should I prepare my loved one by telling them they are moving into a Memory Care community?**

Preparation is most often the best route to take so that the resident does not feel abandoned by simply being dropped off. However, when you decide to do this is up to the family who knows the resident best. Those who are closest to the incoming resident usually have the best sense as to how the individual will handle the news. The amount of information shared, and the timing of the information given, will depend on the ability of your loved ones ability to understand. Some residents who are higher functioning participate in the process from the beginning with the selection of their new residence suite. Because of concerns for increasing anxiety, other residents are told about the move closer to move in day.

**How should I address this with my loved one?**

How you address the move can help establish a successful transition for your loved one. Again, this is dependent upon your family member’s ability to process the information and cope. Many families keep it very simple making statements about “the new residence, new neighborhood and friends.” They may refer to the quality care the community is known for or the many activities or perhaps it’s hospitality in welcoming new neighbors. The decision for how to address the move is purely dependent on the scenario you feel your loved one would respond to best. The main point is for families to reassure their loved ones that they will be nearby and continue to see them which can limit any associated anxiety.

**Sooner rather than later?**

People with progressive memory loss are usually able to better adjust if they are moved early in their disease process. Because moving from the comfort and security of one’s home requires a great deal of adjustment, physically and emotionally, people with Alzheimer’s and similar dementias are more likely to adjust more effectively before the disease has become too advanced.

**How should I prepare for the move?**

Become as knowledgeable about Friendship House as you are able prior to move in day. Meet the key resources, including the Executive Director, Community Coordinator, Wellness Coordinator, and Resident Engagement Coordinator. Understand how our neighborhood works. Visit the area and ask as many questions as you desire to gain a comfort level with the services provided. The more contact and information you have the more confidence you will gain, in both the staff and the environment.

The resident with dementia can become easily confused when not in familiar surroundings or when their surroundings are disturbed. For this reason it is typically recommended that moving day take place without your loved one present. Here are a few hints to make the move in day go as smoothly as possible:

1. Decide what will be moved to the new residence, or moved elsewhere. Remember to include those items moving to the community which are familiar and comfortable for your loved one, such as pictures, clothing, art work, toiletries, etc.
2. The move will be far more successful when the prospective resident arrives and things are already in order. It’s beneficial for them to be surrounded with familiar things including family photos.
3. On move in day plan that your loved one participate in our Life Enrichment Day Program or is out with someone they are fond of and trust so they will remain occupied and away from the business of the move.
4. Ensure that the room is set up prior to returning the resident to her/his residence. This will eliminate confusion. Do not have boxes or debris remaining in the room. The resident should arrive to their suite completely prepared for their comfort.
5. Arrange a particular time that the resident will arrive at the community. This will help staff carve out some personal time to assist in the resident's transition.
6. Allow time for staff to greet the resident and socially introduce them to their neighbors. They may decide to share a cup of tea or activity time. The social greeting is setting the stage for a good first night.
7. Staff will be available to assist and answer any questions.
8. Medications should be given directly to the Executive Director or Executive Assistant. It is essential that medications are not left in the resident's care or in their room.
9. It may take time for a resident to adjust to their new surroundings and can take weeks depending on the resident. Residents should be reassured they will have continued contact with families and friends.

**Who will orient me to Friendship House and answer my on-site questions?**

Our Executive Director and Executive Assistant are here to assist you and your family during this time of transition. The Care Staff is responsible for personal care and leading the resident’s program of activities. They are often the ones who you will see spending a great deal of time with your loved one. The activity program is designed by the Program/ Activities Director and/ or the Memory Care Coordinator. On move in day the Memory Care Coordinator, Director of Assisted Living and/or the Director of Marketing are most happy to show you around and answer all your questions regarding the care of your loved one. She/he will describe a typical day, meal times, activity programs and other essential information. Going forward the Director of Assisted Living and/or the Memory Care Coordinator will be your first point of contact for any issues arising that you need addressed.

**Will staff be available during the night?**

Yes, there is always awake night staff on duty that routinely check the residents both throughout the day and during the nights.

**What things should I pack for my family member?**

Clothing that is comfortable and which encourages independence as much as possible. Shoes or sneakers that are familiar and easy to get on, robes, slippers, pajamas and other comfortable items should be included, however residents will be spending the most part of their day in the common areas such as dining and activities. Typical attire for residents is common “street clothes” such as slacks, shirts, blouses, dresses, skirts etc. as opposed to night time attire. It is also helpful to provide staff with information concerning how your family spends their time on a typical day. Label all items you bring into Friendship House (i.e.: clothes, shoes, glasses, walker, etc.) You should also consider bringing meaningful objects for the residents room as well. Having objects around them that have sentimental value will help with the transition and offer comfort. Consider that those with Alzheimer’s are dependent on the environment around them to provide cues; having familiar objects in their room will help them function better.

**How does staff get to know my family member?**

Prior to move in, the family is expected to provide the community with a Positive Interactions Guide which is contained in the Move in Packet. This document is truly essential in getting to know the new resident, their likes, preferences, traditions and habits. It provides future points of discussion which staff and residents can share. Staff also personally visit the new resident and introduces the resident to others. Mealtimes and activities provide further opportunities for residents and staff to connect in a "social" setting.

**How is laundry handled?**

Our Community Coordinator will advise you of the schedule for cleaning services and bedding changes. Personal laundry may be laundered in house or families may bring laundry home to process. It is best to provide items that are easy to launder. Silk, cashmere and other items that either need hand washing or dry clean only are often difficult to maintain. We ask that all clothing items be machine washable and can be dried in a dryer.

**Are there any items I should not bring?**

Families need to consider a few things in order to maintain a safe environment for all Memory Care residents: Is the item safe and could it pose any hazard for the resident or other confused residents who may inadvertently enter someone else’s room? This includes any toiletry items that can, for example, be misperceived as something edible, or any hobby items that could be misused such as sharp scissors, knives, tools, weapons of any sort (even if a collector item), etc. During move in time, a staff member will assist and help determine if any particular items should be stored elsewhere for safety. Any valuable items should be secured in another location rather than on-site including personal funds or credit cards.

**How are medications handled?**

Keeping safety in mind it is required that any medications, including over the counter medications, are not stored with the resident or in the resident's room. All medications are managed at the community. Families should refrain from providing any medication or over the counter medications directly to the resident so as not to interfere with the physician’s ordered medication regime for the resident. If there are any medication concerns, please discuss these with the Wellness Coordinator or Executive Director.

**Will other residents ever have access to my family member’s room?**

Not typically or intentionally but on occasion a wandering resident may get confused and enter another resident’s room. These residents are quickly redirected away and escorted to activities or their own residence. Residents with dementia can become confused regarding the location of their own room and mistake another rooms for their own. At other times they are simply curious and often attracted to new and interesting things hence the “draw” to a new neighbor’s room.

**When can I reach the Wellness Coordinator if I have a question?**

You will be in close contact with the Wellness Coordinator. You can reach her by calling the main contact number for Friendship House and will be transferred directly to her extension during regular business hours. Most often return calls are made promptly on the same day. Additionally, you will be scheduled for routine meetings or calls regarding the Resident’s Service Plan where all care and resident issues are reviewed and discussed. Know that you can continue to play a vital role in the caregiving process. Just because your loved one if in the care of Friendship House, it does not mean that your loved one no longer needs you. You can continue to play a vital role in the well-being of your loved one. Visit regularly, attend care plan meetings and other staff meetings as related to your loved one, and advocate for him/her as you feel it is necessary.

**May I visit or take my loved one out for the day?**

Absolutely, we encourage visits! If a resident is capable and willing to go out, outings can be a special treat for the resident. Work with the staff to decide how frequently to visit during the first few weeks. Some people may need time alone to settle in. Others may be anxious and need to see you more often. It is often good to try one visit very soon after move-in. If it seems to cause a difficult response, wait a few more days and try again. Certain times of day, when your loved one might feel more energetic or sociable, may be better. Please make prior arrangements with the Executive Assistant of Manager on Duty so they can assure any needed medications are prepared. Also, they will introduce you to the Sign-In/Out Log. When it is time to leave, follow your familiar customs, but avoid saying “goodbye.” Do not drag out the leave-taking or try to bring it to a happy climax, as this may not be possible.

**Are there any special security features that I should know about?**

Yes – a very important question. Exits in our Green House are secured with a key code entry system. Some perimeters, such as in our Garden House, are not locked but rather emit an audio alert to the care staff if an exit area has been breached so that the care staff can respond. To help ensure residents' safety the following protocols are followed:

1. Visitors are most welcome but must use one designated entry.

2. A Sign-In/Out Log is provided for all visitors and required to be used if any resident is leaving the Memory Care even for a short walk.

3. If wishing to take a family member out, please also notify the Executive Assistant or the Manager of Duty.

4. Signing the resident back in on return is also required. The Sign-In/Out Log is conveniently located at the entrance of each house.

5. Additionally, families should advise the Care staff that the resident has returned so that continued monitoring on-site will resume.

**What if my family member needs to be seen by a doctor?**

Residents at Friendship House are required to be escorted if needing to see a physician. Families typically take their loved ones to scheduled appointments which they have arranged. If the responsible party would like the resident to be escorted by a staff member instead, there needs to be an advanced request as soon as possible. The Wellness Coordinator will attempt to accommodate this, however this is dependent on staffing. Associated fees will be explained to you by the Executive Assistant should the appointment be out of the Santa Ynez Valley.

**Who arranges for doctor transportation?**

Families should contact the Wellness Coordinator for assistance with arrangements. Any appointment should be coordinated with her when needing to use community transportation.

**Will I be notified if the family member needs something?**

If your loved one is in need of something that the community does not provide, you will be notified. Most often this is not necessary but at times there are some concerns or comfort items needed in which you would be contacted.

**Will my family member be able to go out with other residents?**

Residents are encouraged to attend outings whenever possible. Families are most welcome to join the outings. Periodic outings for “scenic drives” occur all year round during good weather. Special seasonal trips are also arranged for social or cultural events when appropriate. Check the Activity calendar for planned trips.

**Are there special food items that are needed?**

Nutrition is an important factor in the care of your loved one. A well balanced meal and snacks are provided by the Food Services Coordinator which complements nutritional needs and general resident preferences. If there is an item that a resident does not eat or is allergic to, please advise the Executive Assistant. At mealtime there are always substitutes available. Staff monitor residents' consumption and encourage and cue during meal service and snack times. Residents are frequently offered beverages throughout the day for proper hydration. If there are particular snacks you would like your family member to have, please discuss this with the Executive Assistant to arrange for storage. It is not recommended to store food items in resident rooms.

**Is a family member allowed overnight visitors?**

Yes, in private rooms, if this is not disturbing to the resident.

**How will I know how my family member is doing?**

Your Wellness Coordinator will remain in close contact with you. Any concerns are brought to your attention promptly. Please feel comfortable in visiting or contacting the Wellness Coordinator by phone or visit so you can be assured of your family member’s progress. Most often residents do very well within days and become well-adjusted quickly due to staff attention, social stimulation and the Person Centered Care model of care at Friendship House. We welcome your feedback and wish you every success and peace of mind while your loved one is in our care.