

WHEN THE PERSON YOU CARE ABOUT NEEDS LONG -TERM CARE

By Judith S. Parnes LCSW, CMC

There is no easy way to eliminate the complex emotions related to moving a loved one into a long-term care facility. Your family member will be facing a need to adjust to a new environment and a different routine.

Here are several suggestions to reduce stress for both you and your loved one.

- Arrange to fill out paperwork before the admission day so you can devote most of your energy to helping your family member make the initial adjustment.
- Time your arrival on admission day for the morning or shortly after lunch. Avoid arriving during a shift change or during mealtime when staff members may be too busy to give the new resident welcoming attention.

Friends and family members can help to promote a home-like atmosphere in the resident's room by bringing meaningful things from home:



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artwork, a favorite quilt, awards or photos, items that emphasize the resident's uniqueness and personality.

- The first week is crucial. Ask the facility to assign a special contact person to "adopt" the newcomer;.
- The Social Worker and Activities Director on staff will be very helpful. Consider requesting a psychotherapist to be available who is professionally trained to assist with transitions and issues of adjustment.

Keep the environment stable. Don't move familiar furnishings and equipment unnecessarily. This can disrupt orientation.

- Many gain comfort from their religious sources. Some facilities sponsor a special interfaith spiritual ceremony for newcomers where adjusting to their new home.
- Be knowledgeable about the activities available and encourage your loved one to take part.
- Accompanying the newcomer to an activity may help to get things started. Involvement in facility life will lessen feelings of depression and isolation.

All of these strategies for helping your loved one's transition will have the added benefit of reducing your own difficult feelings about the move.

Learn all you can about how you can continue to participate in the care of your loved one. Only by being an educated consumer can we assure that the quality of care of our loved ones remains at the highest standard.

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