

# Visiting loved ones in assisted living facilities



For many seniors, a day arrives in their lives when it is no longer safe or practical to live at home alone. Assisted living facilities can help seniors adjust to their new situations. Such facilities typically offer comfortable surroundings, caring staff and all the amenities of home.

Although fellow residents can provide companionship and friendships can develop over the course of time, assisted living facility residents also enjoy regular visits from family and friends. Such visits keep seniors connected with their loved ones and break up routines that, over time, may become monotonous.

Some people may feel anxious or awkward visiting assisted living facilities because it may shed light on the frailties or specialized needs of loved ones. This may be especially true if a loved one has a physical, neurological or mental illness. Rather than avoiding visits, individuals can follow these guidelines.

#### Time visits right

Many residents have the most energy in the morning or early afternoon right after meals. Call ahead to find out if there are any medical appointments or outings planned. Visiting during meals or activities can be fun because you'll be engaged and will have something to keep both of you busy.

#### Limit distractions

Find a quiet and comfortable place at the facility where you can spend time with your loved one. This way you can focus most of your attention on the person you are visiting, and he or she can do the same. A sitting room or an outdoor area can be a nice place to spend time away from television or other people's conversations.

#### Plan an excursion

If you are able to take the resident off of the property, arrange to take them somewhere that would interest them. Do not plan too much, because you want the excursion to be fun, not taxing.

#### Bring along items

Gifts are not necessary, but photos, books, puzzles, or even keepsakes from home can serve as catalysts for wonderful conversations.

#### Help the conversation along

If a loved one has dementia, visits can be especially challenging. However, simply being present can be comforting for the person even if conversation is stilted. Be patient and positive. Find topics that stimulate responses, and fill in if things get quiet.

Visiting someone in an assisted living facility can buoy residents' spirits and make for an enjoyable afternoon.

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