

Tips to Prepare You for a Memory Care Visit

When visiting a loved one who lives in a memory care community, you may not know exactly what to expect. It's important to know how to prepare yourself and other friends and family members before visiting a loved one in a memory care community in order to have a successful visit.

- **Keep an open mind.** Memory care isn't what you thought it would be. Seniors with memory loss are often engaged in programming, from art and music therapy to exercise classes and other clubs. It's also important to keep an open mind when it comes to your loved one. They may not react to seeing you like they usually would, in fact, they may not even want to do any activities you have planned to do together. Keeping an open mind and adapting your plans can help to prepare you for a visit.
- **Know what time of day is best to visit.** Because there are so many programs going on, it can help to call ahead and ask when is a good time to visit your loved one. Memory care staff will know their schedule and what they are likely doing, so they can let you know when a good time to stop by will be. His or her memory care staff can also provide insight on when to go based on when your loved one is at their best mentally.
- **Talk to the staff to see how your loved one is doing.** If you are unsure of how your loved one is doing, talk to their memory care team. They can warn you in advance of any alarming changes in your loved one's memory loss and help to better prepare you for your visit. If their memory loss has gotten progressively worse, they can let you know. They will also alert you of any triggers, if they are prone to anger or what helps them to remember who they are. This can help to put you in the right mindset before the visit.
- **Know their visiting policies.** Be sure to ask the staff when the visiting hours are and if there are any restrictions on visitation. For example, if someone is sick and wants to visit are they allowed? Will they need to wear a mask? Be sure to ask if children are allowed to visit and verify what ages are acceptable. Are there limits to how many people can be in the room at once? It's important to know these rules and plan for it well ahead of a visit.
- **Understand your loved one may not know who you are.** Because of your loved one's memory loss, it's possible that they may not know who you are at first. Be calm and reassuring. Introduce yourself, but never ask if they remember you, as this can cause them to become upset. Don't take this personally, as they have no control over what they do and do not remember.
- **Bring a small gift that could spark their memory.** If possible, try to bring a gift that will make them remember who you are, or at least could potentially cause them to remember a fond memory. This can help you to bond, connect and bring them some joy during your visit. Make sure the gift is from a few years ago since memory loss impacts the most recent memories first.

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- **Expect that they may want to come home with you.** Your loved one might not realize that they do not live with you, so when you leave, they may try to come home with you or at least ask if they can. Reassure them that you'll see them again soon and that you enjoyed their company.

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