



The Dementia Caregiver's Toolkit

Six tools to use at each stage of care

- A daily routine and comfort planner to bring a predictable shape to the day
- A behavior tracker to find the unmet needs behind hard behaviors
- A communication reference for easier exchanges
- A readiness checklist for weighing a move to memory care
- A weekly self-check to protect the caregiver's own health
- A list of questions to ask care community teams, plus local Lansing resources



This toolkit shares general guidance and should not replace medical advice. Talk with a doctor about any lasting change in a loved one's memory, judgment, or behavior, especially if dementia or Alzheimer's is suspected.



Tool 1: Daily Routine and Comfort Planner

MAKE CAREGIVING MORE PREDICTABLE

Predictable days lower stress for people living with dementia. Plan the most demanding tasks for the morning and leave time after the day's activities to wind down for bed.

Save your notes and schedule to share with family and try to make each day consistent.



Wake and morning care - Time: _____ to _____

Breakfast - Time: _____ to _____

Morning activity - Time: _____ to _____

Lunch - Time: _____ to _____

Midday rest - Time: _____ to _____

Dinner and evening - Time: _____ to _____

Bedtime routine - Time: _____ to _____



Comfort Check-In

USE THIS LIST WHEN A LOVED ONE SEEMS UPSET

- ☐ Offer a snack or water in case of hunger or thirst
- ☐ Check for signs of pain and adjust position or clothing
- ☐ Offer a rest or a change of pace for potential fatigue
- ☐ Lower the volume and soften the lighting if the room feels busy
- ☐ Check whether a bathroom trip is needed
- ☐ Adjust the room temperature or clothing layers

Keep water within reach. Dehydration is a common trigger for irritability, restlessness, and added confusion, so offer drinks through the day.

Tool 2: Behavior Triggers

FIND THE NEED BEHIND THE ISSUE



Agitation and aggression usually signal an unmet need rather than defiance. Log what happens just before and after a hard behavior to reveal a more effective care pattern.

DATE & TIME	WHAT HAPPENED	WHAT CAME BEFORE	WHAT HELPED

Common triggers to watch: hunger, thirst, pain, fatigue, a full bladder, too much noise or light, a change in surroundings, or an itchy or uncomfortable piece of clothing.



Tool 3: Communication Reminders

QUICK TIPS FOR CALM CONVERSATIONS

INSTEAD OF THIS

TRY THIS

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| Long explanations with several steps at once | ➔ | Using short, clear sentences, one idea at a time |
| Open questions like "What would help right now?" | ➔ | Offering a choice of two, such as "Red towel or blue towel?" |
| Correcting the facts or arguing over details | ➔ | Addressing feelings and physical issues first with a reassuring tone |
| Talking from across the room or while rushing | ➔ | Making eye contact at their level, then speaking slowly |
| Using words and complex ideas alone | ➔ | Using a photo or motion alongside the words |

Tool 4: Is It Time to Consider Memory Care?

A CHECKLIST FOR WEIGHING THE NEXT STEP

Home caregiving can work for a while, but these signs could indicate a need for change:

- ☐ Caregiving now requiring round-the-clock attention
- ☐ Increases in wandering, falling, or medication errors
- ☐ Aggression, sundowning, or confusion becoming too much to manage
- ☐ Signs that the caregiver isn't taking care of their health or job
- ☐ Daily tasks such as bathing and eating requiring specialized help
- ☐ Growing feelings of isolation or paranoia
- ☐ The door locks, stove, knives, and medications have become daily worries

A move to memory care is not a failure. It often returns the caregiver to the role of daughter, son, or spouse, while trained team members take over the difficulties of daily care.



Tool 5: Caregiver Weekly Self-Check

PROTECT THE PERSON PROVIDING CARE

Encourage caregivers to complete this checklist once a week to see if they need more help:

- Rested most nights this week — ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Ate regular meals — ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Moved or exercised a few times — ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Spent time with a friend or outside the caregiving role — ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Took at least one real break — ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Asked for or accepted help — ☐ Yes ☐ No
- Kept up personal appointments — ☐ Yes ☐ No



Tool 6: Questions to Ask on a Memory Care Visit

BRING THIS LIST TO EACH COMMUNITY VISIT

Touring care communities can help make the options and possibilities clear. These questions can help caregivers and their families choose their next steps with confidence:

- What training do team members receive in dementia care, and how often is it refreshed?
- What is the ratio of team members to residents during the day and overnight?
- How are daily routines and activities planned for residents living with dementia?
- How does the community keep residents secure while allowing freedom to move about?
- How are families kept informed about changes in a loved one's health?
- What is included in the monthly rate, and what costs extra?
- How does care adjust as a resident's dementia progresses?
- What dining support is offered for residents who need help eating?
- What if a resident needs care beyond what the community provides?



Local Resources for Lansing Caregivers

HELP IS WITHIN REACH



- **The Alzheimer's Association** runs a free 24/7 Helpline at **(800) 272-3900**, staffed year-round in more than 200 languages
- **The Michigan Great Lakes Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association** offers support groups, education, and the Lansing Walk to End Alzheimer's
- **The Courtyard at Delta** provides assisted living and memory care in Lansing, plus short respite stays that give family caregivers a break

Contact the team at The Courtyard at Delta to learn more about how to manage your caregiving situation or move to the next step in your loved one's dementia care. Schedule a visit to meet the assisted living and memory care teams and see firsthand how stability in daily care helps families be families again.



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