Resources to Remember

Caregiver Guide

UNDERSTANDING THE MEMORY LOSS JOURNEY

SUNRISE
SENIOR LIVING
THE JOY OF EVERY DAY
CAREGIVER GUIDE

As a leader in assisted living and Alzheimer’s, dementia and memory care support, Sunrise Senior Living knows firsthand the challenges of being a caregiver for a loved one with memory loss. The memory loss experience is often compared to a journey, and we’re here to serve as your trusted partner and guide as you accompany your loved one along the way.

Rosalynn Carter once said, “There are only four kinds of people in the world: Those who have been caregivers, those who are currently caregivers, those who will be caregivers and those who will need caregivers.” Her powerful statement perfectly summarizes the universal nature of being a care provider.

In this guide, you’ll find advice and expertise that will not only help you improve the care you provide for your loved one—it will help you care for yourself, so that your own experience is as rich and rewarding as possible.

Meet Rita SUNRISE MEMORY CARE EXPERT

Rita Altman, R.N., M.S.N., C.V.M., is vice president, Memory Care and Programming for Sunrise. She uses the latest evidence-based research to design and oversee the implementation of Sunrise’s memory care and assisted living programs. She’s also a regular Huffington Post contributor on the topics of memory care, aging and caregiver issues.

Rita has more than 30 years of nursing experience, including nursing education, staff development training, intergenerational programming and management in childcare, adult day care, assisted living and skilled nursing settings. She is one of two Validation Masters in the United States and one of just seven worldwide, and has studied under Validation Method developer Naomi Feil.

HEAR MORE FROM RITA: SunriseSeniorLiving.com/MemoryCareBlog
What to Expect

SENSORY DIFFERENCES
The various causes of memory loss can also exacerbate hearing and vision impairment. Simple changes can help your loved one function more independently—for example, use brightly colored dishware that contrasts with the tablecloth, or bath towels that stand out against the walls.

NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION
Those with memory loss are highly sensitive to our body language, and their own communication may not always take the form of words. Pay attention to non-verbal cues, so you can determine the underlying emotion and best response. For example, a tense jaw, rapid breathing and/or pacing may indicate anger—keep your posture non-threatening and your tone calm.

LACK OF INHIBITION
Memory loss often dulls previously held social restraints and sensitivity. While it’s okay to find certain behaviors embarrassing or hurtful, remember that your loved one’s reality—and interpretation of social situations—may be different from yours. These inevitable social stumbles aren’t your fault, and responding gently and calmly demonstrates your empathy as a caregiver.

NEED FOR ASSISTANCE
Your loved one may be embarrassed about needing help with activities of daily living, like eating, so try your best to preserve their dignity in the process of helping. For example, adapt favorite foods by cutting them into strips or creating wraps or sandwiches—this turns them into more easily managed “finger foods.”

10 Warning Signs

Sometimes it’s hard to tell the difference between age-related changes in a loved one and the first signs of Alzheimer’s disease, dementia or other forms of memory loss. To help, the Alzheimer’s Association® created this list of signs to look for:

1. Memory changes that disrupt daily life
2. Challenges in planning or solving problems
3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure
4. Confusion with time or place
5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships
6. New problems with words in speaking and writing
7. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps
8. Decreased or poor judgment
9. Withdrawal from work or social activities
10. Changes in mood and personality

You may notice one or more of these signs in different degrees. If you notice any of them, please speak with your loved one’s doctor or other professional.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT: SunriseSeniorLiving.com/MemoryCare
Traits of Successful Caregivers

Caring for a loved one with memory loss can be the most fulfilling work you’ll ever do. But, most people aren’t prepared for the many challenges involved. In more than three decades of working with families and training professional caregivers, we’ve learned that the best ones develop a variety of important traits:

**Compassion.** A caring heart can keep you energized through tough times, and can motivate you to seek training and resources that improve the quality of care you provide.

**Composure.** Meeting personal care needs like dressing or using the bathroom can be highly uncomfortable. Learning to keep your composure when performing unpleasant tasks is a gift of dignity to anyone receiving care of this nature.

**Empathy.** Your loved one may feel embarrassed, frustrated or angry as they grow less able to manage their personal needs. Take a deep breath, step back and consider their perspective.

**Diplomacy.** Your tone of voice and body language say as much as your actual words. Prepare yourself mentally for challenging discussions or negotiations—sometimes for simple matters like meal or activity preferences—to help you communicate with dignity and respect.

**Creativity.** If your loved one resists necessary activities like bathing, brushing their teeth or even eating, don’t be afraid to get creative: play music, recall a family memory or turn the task into a game.

**Humor.** The ability to find moments that make you and your loved one laugh is a great skill. Maintaining a sense of humor can help you both through some challenging times, but always make sure to laugh with—not at—your loved one.

**Patience.** Multiple repetitions of stories or requests can be stressful for even the most patient caregivers. Develop a strategy for handling these situations, and don’t be afraid to step back for a moment.

**Self-Kindness.** All caregivers occasionally lose their patience or even say something they might regret. Learn to ask for forgiveness (or simply forgive yourself) when appropriate, and move forward, as lingering guilt or remorse can be emotionally draining.

**Self-Awareness.** Know your limits. Asking for help isn’t a sign of weakness—it shows you’re working to manage your stress levels to ensure you’re providing the best care possible. Reach out to a friend, family member or even a professional for guidance when needed.

Support groups are an invaluable tool for developing these skills. All Sunrise communities offer regular gatherings for caregivers and family members, where you can share your experiences and learn from those who’ve been there.

Contact your local Sunrise community to learn more about our support groups.
**Building Bridges**

It’s tempting to label the words and actions of loved ones as “difficult behaviors.” Instead, view these things as “communication”—and try to identify which basic human need your loved one is trying to meet. Also, look to initiate communications of your own to help make positive connections.

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**Respect**

By celebrating your loved one’s individuality, you preserve their dignity. Show how much you respect them by:

- Using their preferred name or nickname
- Making eye contact when communicating
- Speaking with a warm tone of voice

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**Reminisce**

You and your loved one can strengthen your social bonds to ease the caregiver relationship. Sharing memories helps them in a variety of other ways:

- Reaffirming identity by connecting with their past
- Using past coping mechanisms as ways they can handle difficulties in the present
- Recalling pleasant experiences can bring joy and comfort in the moment

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**Bridge**

Allow your loved one to hold a familiar item, one that’s similar to the item you’re using to provide care. This simple act can bridge the gap between feeling a loss of control and maintaining dignity:

- When helping with grooming, hand your loved one a favorite brush or comb as you comb their hair
- If your loved one requires your full assistance when dining, still place a utensil in their hand as you assist them with eating

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**Empathize**

We may not have personally experienced all that a senior has, but we all share the same emotions. Tap into your own experiences to help acknowledge what your loved one is feeling:

- Listen in a way that meets the human need for self expression, love, belonging and self worth
- Connect with body language and tone of voice, not just words

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**VALIDATION METHOD**

The Validation Method, developed by renowned social worker Naomi Feil, M.S.W., A.C.S.W., is a manner of communicating with and helping those who are disoriented. It is a practical way to serve those experiencing memory loss by meeting them in their own reality, which in turn reduces stress, enhances dignity and increases happiness.

**LEARN MORE THROUGH OUR VALIDATION METHOD SELF STUDY AT:**
SunriseSeniorLiving.com/JourneyOfDiscovery
As your loved one experiences memory loss and can no longer make decisions with confidence, they begin to depend on you more and more. However, dependency takes a toll on self esteem.

To balance this delicate situation, particularly during the early stages of memory loss, encourage your loved one to cultivate life skills. These are skills we all develop and use—things that provide a sense of purpose, accomplishment and individuality.

**IDENTIFY SKILLS**

What activities did your loved one once enjoy? Did they have hobbies or an occupational skill they can still employ? Life skills may include painting, sculpting, storytelling, gardening, caring for pets or simply handling household chores. Look for skills that tap into your loved one’s implicit or procedural memory. Once you find a life skill that your loved one treasured, encourage them to use it regularly.

**CULTIVATE THROUGH APPLICATION**

Get your loved one involved in an interest group for seniors, or have them lead one of their own. Encourage them to use their life skills whenever possible—not only will it stimulate them mentally, but it will also give their days new purpose.

**CONNECT AT MEALTIME**

Mealtimes help caregivers connect with a loved one and nurture their spirit as well as their body. They also provide an opportunity to engage life skills and help them maintain a sense of security, purpose and meaning.

- **Allow for preferences.** Offer your loved one a balanced meal, while providing their favorite foods as often as possible. Encourage them to help select food items, particularly if cooking was a life skill they enjoyed.
- **Keep it simple, yet familiar and dignified.** Elaborate table settings can confuse a person with memory loss. Use contrasting colors, and encourage independence where possible.

When all else fails to spark good, healthy communication, try a simple “Tell me about it.” You’ll be showing empathy and preserving your loved one’s dignity.

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**Creating Meaning and Purpose**

The Validation Method incorporates specific techniques for effective verbal communication:

- Try to position yourself at or slightly below your loved one’s eye level. This less-dominant stance shows respect and supports dignity.
- If a loved one tells a story you don’t believe occurred, avoid correcting them or treating them like a child. Never argue or ask, “Don’t you remember?” If you need to redirect the conversation, ask, “Did you ever?” or, “Tell me about a time when …”
- Ask questions about extremes. For example: “What was the best thing about that day?” “What was the worst thing about that job?” Responding to these questions helps your loved one express feelings more fully.
- Avoid asking “why,” which may make your loved one feel defensive. Connect more effectively by using “who,” “what,” “when,” “where” and “how.”

When all else fails to spark good, healthy communication, try a simple “Tell me about it.” You’ll be showing empathy and preserving your loved one’s dignity.
Memory Lane

Scrapbooks and shadow boxes are excellent tools for triggering positive memories and facilitating engagement.

To create them, gather pictures and items your loved one cherishes. Subjects may include:

- Friends and family
- Pets
- Professional items
- Vacation and travel
- Hobbies

Include descriptive captions to help jog your loved one’s memory. Make sure the captions are simple and written in large, easy-to-read type.

The best pictures and items to include are those that were relevant before your loved one’s memory began to decline. For those with memory loss, mementos like these are the easiest to recognize.

Know that these memories are a healthy source of pride. You can encourage this feeling through the simple act of sitting with your loved one and asking about the various images and items.

Every Sunrise suite has a shadow box outside the door, personalized with photos and mementos that are important to the resident and their family.

Music in Memory Care

Both anecdotal evidence and scientific research make it clear: Music plays an important role in memory care.

MUSIC STIMULATES THE MIND

Some of the best memory care approaches tap into the retained abilities of someone with memory loss, focusing on their strengths rather than their losses. Music can also be a bridge that helps caregivers reach a loved one who is no longer able to communicate with words.

MUSIC ENERGIZES THE BODY

Music with a tempo that matches the pace of the exercise helps raise energy levels and makes repetitive exercises more enjoyable. Also, singing can increase the flow of oxygen in the body, which improves alertness, motor control and coordination.

MUSIC NURTURES THE SPIRIT

Most people agree: Music affects mood, and may even reduce pain. Research indicates that music can help ease the symptoms of depression by up to 25% and reduce pain by up to 21%.*

MUSIC AIDS IN CAREGIVING

Certain aspects of caregiving—like assisting your loved one with personal care, especially in the bathroom—can be particularly challenging. Incorporating favorite songs or pieces of music can make the tasks more enjoyable for both the caregiver and person with memory loss.

At Sunrise, music therapy and appreciation are a strong component of the memory care program.

*See http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2006/05/060524123803.htm.
The Healthy Caregiver

Seeking and receiving the support you need can make a real difference in your ability to cope with stress, remain healthy and continue to care for your loved one.

JOIN AN ALZHEIMER’S SUPPORT GROUP
Support groups are invaluable, as they provide an opportunity to share advice, commiserate and learn from others who have the same concerns, feelings, stresses and challenges.

TAP INTO ONLINE RESOURCES
Facebook groups, message boards, blogs and chat rooms provide another medium for connecting with and learning from those experiencing similar challenges. You’ll also find an abundance of news, research and information relating to memory loss.

CENTER YOURSELF
The Validation Method encourages “centering” to help remain calm and patient during the inevitable frustrating moments of caring for a loved one with memory loss. Close your eyes—in private if necessary—and take a few deep, slow breaths. You’ll feel calmer, and your energy will be more focused.

KEEP A JOURNAL
Write down thoughts and feelings about being a caregiver—even the ones that make you uncomfortable. It’s a powerful way to confront your emotions and process them in a healthy fashion.

TAKE A BREAK
Sadly, many caregivers do not get the break they deserve and so critically need. Periodic “respites” (time away from caregiving responsibilities) are critical.

Respite can take a variety of forms—for the caregiver, a few hours or an overnight stay when a friend or family member takes on the caregiving responsibilities, or by your loved one spending several days at an assisted living community like Sunrise. Respite care offers several benefits:

- Relieves stress as you relax or focus on something you enjoy
- Provides a new, enriching experience for your loved one
- Results in more enjoyable time spent together afterwards

HOW CAREGIVING IMPACTS YOUR HEALTH
According to the Alzheimer’s Association (alz.org), caregivers report higher incidences than non-caregivers of anxiety and depression. When tested, they also show higher levels of stress hormones. These factors may lead to hypertension, reduced immune function, coronary heart disease and other health problems.

These risks make it more critical than ever to maintain your own health—which means taking well-deserved breaks. Find time each day to do at least one thing for yourself in order to reduce stress.

Sunrise Short-Term Stays offer caregivers the opportunity to take time for themselves, while ensuring their loved ones receive top-quality care in a loving, warm environment.

LEARN MORE ABOUT SHORT-TERM STAYS AT: SunriseSeniorLiving.com/ShortTerm
Overcoming Challenges

If your loved one’s sense of time is distorted:

• Sometimes the best response is to simply accept that your loved one believes they are living in the past.
• If your loved one appears to be in another time and place:
  – Avoid attempting to bring them to your reality—the facts won’t change their perception.
  – Acknowledge them and introduce yourself.
  – Ask if you can spend time together.

If you are unsure how to greet your loved one:

• Always smile, and approach from the front to prevent startling them.
• Evaluate their body language before reaching out to make physical contact.
• If they recognize you by sight, use your usual greeting for them.
• If they don’t recognize you, call their name and introduce yourself by name. Don’t add a lot of details about your relationship, as this might be overwhelming.

If your loved one is angry:

• When approaching someone who appears angry or aggressive, stay at least five feet away.
• Be careful about approaching face to face or making direct eye contact—this can be misconstrued as threatening and may cause them to lash out.
• Establish trust before moving closer to your loved one, in order to help prevent injury.
• Avoid appearing controlling. Give them time, excuse yourself and approach again later.

If they fail to recognize you:

• Don’t force the issue or repeat your name over and over—this will only create frustration and confusion.
• Remain calm, try to make eye contact and discuss something you know they like or find comforting.

Deciding to Move

Keep in mind that the decision to move to a memory care community—as well as the move itself—involves stressful transitions for both seniors and caregivers.

• **Stay positive and honest.** Lying about the reasons for the move or pretending the stay is temporary will cause your loved one to lose trust in you.

• **Keep your communication simple.** Give only as much detail as your loved one can comprehend. Too much information can be confusing and upsetting for someone with memory loss.

• **Involve your loved one where possible.** Visit the chosen community together prior to the move so you can observe how they interact and respond to the setting.

Sunrise has several decades of expertise in easing the transition to our communities and making residents feel happy and secure in their new home.
THE JOY OF EVERY DAY

The Sunrise Difference is more than a vision or set of principles—for our team and our residents, it’s a way of life.

Sunrise Founders Paul and Terry Klaassen revolutionized senior living in 1981, when they introduced their innovative, resident-centered approach to care. The Klaassens’ philosophy, which champions the quality of life for all seniors, is grounded in the belief that every resident’s needs are unique. Sunrise continues to be the leader in providing a safe, positive, personalized living experience. Known for our comfortable, spacious surroundings, we offer seniors support from team members 24 hours a day, in a kind and inviting atmosphere that doesn’t just feel like home—it is home.

Sunrise Reminiscence Neighborhoods provide comfort and security in a separate home environment specially designed for those with memory loss, including secured outdoor areas. Our Designated Care Managers and Life Enrichment Managers serve the same residents every day, which allows them to closely monitor their health and well-being. Activity programs offer multi-sensory experiences, daily exercise and outings, as well as group and individualized activities.

Sunrise not only cares for those with memory care needs—it also serves their families and caregivers. Most Sunrise communities are equipped with a resource library that contains the latest materials on Alzheimer’s disease and memory loss, as well as information that may make your caregiving experience more positive. In addition, all Sunrise communities offer regularly scheduled support groups for caregivers.

Visit SunriseSeniorLiving.com to learn more and find a Sunrise community near you.

Valuable Resources

ALZHEIMER’S ASSOCIATION: Alz.org

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED PERSONS: AARP.org/Caregiving

BRAIN-FRIENDLY RECIPES: SeniorEats.com

CAREGIVER MAGAZINE: Caregiver.com

JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY: SunriseSeniorLiving.com/JourneyOfDiscovery

NATIONAL ALLIANCE FOR CAREGIVING: Caregiving.org

SUNRISE BLOG: SunriseBlog.com

SUNRISE MEMORY CARE: SunriseSeniorLiving.com/MemoryCare

VALIDATION TRAINING INSTITUTE: VFvalidation.org

DOWNLOAD AN ELECTRONIC VERSION OF THIS GUIDE AT: SunriseSeniorLiving.com/CaregiverGuide
THE SUNRISE SIGNATURE EXPERIENCE

No one champions quality of life for seniors like Sunrise Senior Living. We’ve devoted more than 30 years to refining our resident-centered approach to care, filling every community with the special touches of home and building the most passionate and skilled teams of serving hearts.

OUR MISSION

To Champion Quality of Life for All Seniors

OUR FOUNDATIONAL BELIEF

Belief in the Sacred Value of Human Life

OUR PRINCIPLES OF SERVICE

Preserving Dignity
Nurturing the Spirit
Celebrating Individuality
Enabling Freedom of Choice
Encouraging Independence
Involving Family and Friends

OUR CORE VALUES

Passion
Joy in Service
Stewardship
Respect
Trust

SunriseSeniorLiving.com