

Live Life to its Fullest.

A guide for
Finding the Right Memory Care
Community



Confronting the Diagnosis

Alzheimer's and other related dementias can be a life-changing event for both those who are diagnosed and for those close to them. While family, friends and even those diagnosed with the disorder may have sensed subtle changes in memory and behavior prior to diagnosis, receiving an official determination that a friend or family member is suffering from a memory impairment can cause the individual and caregiver alike to experience a number of different feelings, such as shock, disbelief, fear, denial, sadness, anger or even relief.

*There is no right or wrong
reaction when faced with dementia.*



Facing the Challenges Ahead

Support to those who have a memory impairment is sometimes an emotional process for a caregiver. Emotions can overwhelm the individual and range from the lowest of fears to the highest of hopes and can be set off by thoughts of how Alzheimer's will impact the caregiver's life today, as well as into the future. Beyond the obvious emotional toll that can come from a diagnosis, the staggering pressure to make important legal, financial, immediate and long-term care-planning decisions can be overwhelming.

Following the Journey to Comfort and Support

With an increasing number of the U.S. population reaching 65 years and older, diagnoses of Alzheimer's and other dementias are becoming more common. There has never been a greater need for specialized memory care than today. Nor has there been a period of time with as many advances in programming and treatment of memory impairments to improve individuals' physical, mental and social well-being. Today's memory care communities offer highly specialized wellness programs well beyond the scope of services offered at traditional nursing homes and assisted living communities.

The process of considering a memory care community for a family member is not unlike any other important life decision. The more information you have about the different stages of Alzheimer's disease and the different forms of dementia, the better equipped you will be to match your family member's needs with a memory care community based on their approach, programming, treatment and care.

Within this guide, we'll cover:

- The three general stages of Alzheimer's (early, middle and late)
- The benefits of a memory care community
- Tips for researching the right community for your family member and questions to ask in your search

Understanding the Stages of Alzheimer's

While dementia is the general term for memory loss and other mental disabilities that are severe enough to interfere with daily life, Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia, affecting an estimated 60 to 80 percent of dementia cases, according to research performed by the Alzheimer's Association.

Symptoms of Alzheimer's affects individuals differently, however, there are three general stages of the disease:

Mild Alzheimer's
Early Stage

Moderate Alzheimer's
Middle Stage

Severe Alzheimer's
Late Stage

At the mild Alzheimer's stage, friends and family may begin to notice memory and cognitive issues. These changes may be marked by frequently losing or misplacing things or frequently forgetting conversations, appointments and events. There may be difficulty remembering the names of new acquaintances or having trouble following the flow of a conversation. It should be noted that some memory loss is age-related and normal. Examples of normal changes include the occasional difficulty in finding the right word, but no trouble holding a conversation or being able to function independently and pursue normal activities, despite occasional memory lapses.

Within the moderate Alzheimer's stage, the symptoms of the disease become more obvious and apparent to those around them. This phase is marked by difficulty remembering one's history and life stories, difficulty with basic math, forgetting how to do things done many times before, getting lost or disoriented, even in familiar places, and significant confusion.

The key to successful caregiving is to not focus on the losses of the disease, but rather on the individual's remaining capabilities.

The latter stage, severe Alzheimer's, requires constant supervision and, in most cases, professional support. Symptoms typically include words being frequently forgotten, misused or garbled and repeated phrases and stories in the same conversation. Changes in mood, personality and unpredictable behavioral issues begin to surface, as does the inability to recognize faces, oftentimes, close friends and relatives. Physical symptoms can include loss of bowel and bladder control, socially inappropriate behavior and wandering. Individuals at this stage of the disease will become withdrawn from social interactions and will have trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships.

Benefits of a Memory Care Community

The benefits of a memory care community that offers more than traditional assisted living is that it offers those living with Alzheimer's and other memory impairments specialized services to have, maintain or experience an improved and dignified quality of life. The key differentiators of a memory care community from other care options are:

1. Singular focus on dementia care

Every aspect of the community, from how family members and friends are greeted at the entrance by team members, to the food that is prepared and the programs offered, is focused on promoting and enhancing the capabilities of those with memory loss.

2. Specialty-trained team

Many memory care communities have shifted from an impairment-based practice to an abilities-based practice that's person-centered. With a low team-to-resident ratio, caregivers are able to learn more about the resident, including who they are, what they've experienced in life and what brought them a sense of purpose and success. Using input from friends and family members of the resident, team members can bring interests, experiences and hobbies to life through individualized programs.

3. Specialized programming, care and therapy

Purpose-built memory care communities create a lifestyle of comfort, security and purpose for residents. Engaging programs are created to develop current strengths, abilities and wellness, encourage cognitive function and social engagement, stimulate reminiscence and provide joy and meaning. These communities integrate all facets of a resident's life — past and present — in a multi-dimensional and holistic approach to wellness and promote positive ways for residents and families to maintain connections, despite the challenges that come with memory impairment.

4. Comfort to caregivers and family

Choosing a memory care community can be one of the more difficult and emotional decisions you'll make, given the unique needs of your friend or family member. However, a thoughtful decision on what's best for that individual can bring a great deal of comfort to the caregiver and family. Knowing their basic needs (meal preparation, personal care, laundry, housekeeping, etc.) are being met in a safe and secure environment can bring immediate relief to an overburdened family, without feelings of guilt. Peace of mind comes from knowing that he or she is receiving specialized programming to meet individual cognitive, social and emotional needs. Family caregivers then have the ability to enjoy time with that loved one, knowing specially trained team members are watching after their needs 24 hours a day, seven days a week.



There are many positive and significant results that come from effective programming and therapy, such as art and music, that enrich the lives of residents at memory care communities, including:

- Helping individuals feel relaxed and calm
- Increased sense of control
- Reduction in depression and anxiety
- Reduction in medication and negative side effects from medication
- Decreased falls and injuries
- Fewer emergency room visits
- Fewer incidents involving physical outburst behaviors
- Increased sense of humor and joy
- Increased self-esteem and sense of identity
- Reduction in loneliness and boredom



The Right Questions Yield the Right Answers

The more you know, the more confident you'll be about your decision for your friend or family member's care, comfort and safety. Here's a short list of questions you can ask to help as you explore memory care options.



Questions to Ask During Your Search

Environment and First Impressions	Notes
1. Does the community feel warm and inviting?	
2. Do you receive a warm greeting and are welcomed by team members?	
3. Does the community have secured outdoor areas for residents to enjoy?	
4. Are the community team members knowledgeable and supportive?	
5. Is the community secure and well-designed to accommodate the needs of residents with dementia?	
6. Are common areas well lit? Is there a mix of artificial vs. natural lighting?	
7. Who manages the community and what is their experience with senior living?	
8. Is the community free of off-putting odors, appear neat and clean and at an appropriate and comfortable temperature?	

Questions to Ask During Your Search

Dining Features	Notes
1. What entrées are provided (Vegetarian or other dietary needs)? Is it included in the monthly rent fee?	
2. Are dining considerations made for residents requiring finger foods or specialized utensils to eat?	
3. Are common dining rooms available or do residents dine in their apartments?	
4. What level of assistance for feeding is provided by the team?	
5. Does a certified dietician oversee choices of entrées?	
6. Are snacks available to residents?	
7. Is there a policy for allowing friends and family to dine with residents?	

Values and Services	Notes
1. Does the community publicly state their core values and beliefs as a memory care community?	
2. What levels of memory care does the community provide? Is it stated in writing?	

Questions to Ask During Your Search

Values and Services, continued ...	Notes
3. Is the team available on-site 24/7?	
4. How often are housekeeping and laundry services provided?	
5. What type of training has the team received?	
6. What is the monthly rate? What services does that rate include? (dining, utilities, programming, etc.) Or, is the monthly rate all-inclusive?	
7. What level of personal assistance can residents expect?	
8. How is the community and memory care neighborhood secured?	
9. What programs (exercise, physical therapy and social) does the community offer?	
10. What unique programs does the community use for memory care? (i.e. music therapy, memory box, pet therapy, etc.)	
11. Does the community accommodate special care needs, such as diabetic care, mobility issues or wandering?	
12. How does the community communicate with families about a resident's well-being?	

Questions to Ask During Your Search

Healthcare	Notes
1. What are the health services provided at the community, beyond hygiene/personal care, bathing, toileting, incontinence care, etc.?	
2. What are the accreditations of the nursing team?	
3. What level of nursing is available 24/7?	
4. What is the policy for handling medical emergencies?	
5. Are rehabilitation services available on-site?	
6. Is there a physician available for on-site appointments?	
7. If the need arises, is there a partnership with a hospice service?	
8. Are there other medical services available on-site, (i.e. podiatry, dental, home health, etc.)?	
9. Does the community have robust protocols in place for pandemics or other health concerns?	

Questions to Ask During Your Search

Costs	Notes
1. What is the application and move-in process?	
2. How does the fee structure work?	
3. What is included in the monthly service fee? (dining, utilities, housekeeping, programming, etc.)	
4. Are there different costs for varying size of suites and categories of care?	

“One day at a time — this is enough. Do not look back and grieve over the past, for it is gone; and do not be troubled about the future, for it has yet to come. Live in the present, and make it so beautiful that it will be worth remembering.”

— Ida Scott Taylor McKinney

Live Life to its Fullest.

Living at The Crossings means feeling connected, honored and fulfilled, regardless of physical or memory challenges. In our Valeo™ memory care neighborhood, you — or your family member — will feel supported and inspired by the way we focus on their individual strengths while celebrating their life. We see what's unique about every person who lives here and make our support as unique as they are. The result is a memory care neighborhood where every day is a new opportunity to live life to its fullest.

The Valeo memory care neighborhood is centered on customized support and working one-on-one with residents to ensure their dignity and well-being through wellness Signature Programs that offer connection and engagement. We honor their legacy and help them achieve their personal goals. In addition, trained and caring team members, with on-site medical oversight, provide the level of care that each resident deserves and that their family expects.

The Crossings at Ironbridge sits apart in Chester, VA, for its beautiful, calming location, chef-prepared menus, and a calendar brimming with fun and possibilities. Pet-friendly, maintenance-free senior living weaves together the best of personalized care and attentive services to create a warm and delightful experience every day.

We invite you to call (804) 748-7000 today to learn more about memory care for engaged living and wellness at The Crossings.

Sincerely,

Melissa Freeman

Melissa Freeman
Executive Director



THE
CROSSINGS
AT IRONBRIDGE
AN AGEWELL LIVING COMMUNITY

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