

CARING FOR A PARENT OR LOVED ONE

Topic #5: Recognizing The Signs That A Loved Needs Help

As we age, our needs, priorities, and abilities change. Baby boomers are just now finding that out as they face the realities of aging. And to make things even more challenging, they may find themselves caught in the precarious position of caring not only for their children, but also their aging parents. That's why they're known as "The Sandwich Generation."

We all love our independence and certainly want to support our parent's desire to live independently, too. But what if you begin to notice things that are calling into question your parent's safety and wellbeing? How do you know when it's time to intervene? What are the signs to look for? Who can you turn to for help?

At Meridian At Home, we've developed a helpful assessment tool to help you evaluate how your loved ones are doing and if they need some extra help from a professional.

Let's begin with Physical Health. Do they have a chronic illness such as diabetes, severe arthritis, or high blood pressure? Or suffer from a more serious illness such as cancer, stroke, or heart attack? Have they put on or lost a lot of weight that is unexplained? Fallen Down? Are they having trouble walking, sleeping, or driving?

Next, consider their Mental or Behavioral Health. Are they showing signs of confusion, forgetfulness, isolation or depression? Have they been diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder, Alzheimer's or other form of dementia? Have you witnessed drastic mood swings, sadness, or loneliness?

How about Daily Living Skills? Can they dress themselves? Bathe, comb their hair, climb stairs, use the phone? Can they safely cook and prepare their meals, drive their car, go to the store, or do yard work?

Notice their Appearance and Hygiene. How would you rate their overall appearance? Are their clothes clean? Do they bathe regularly? Brush their teeth daily?

It's very important that your loved ones take their Medications properly. Are they routinely taking their medications? How many do they take and what are they for? Are their medications being purchased at the same pharmacy so a pharmacist can look out for possible conflicts in their medications. What are the side effects?

What about their interests and Lifestyle? Have they lost interest in their favorite hobby or stopped doing things they used to love like gardening, reading, going to church, or seeing friends?

Loss of interest, isolation, and lack of energy could mean they are depressed or ill.

What about Bills and Finances? Are they keeping up with their bills? Spending their money wisely? Can they afford to pay for the things they need like food, electricity, gas, or medicine?

It's important to know your loved ones are Safe At Home. Is the apartment or house being kept up? Can they get around it easily and safely? Is the neighborhood safe? Are the smoke and burglar alarms working?

Finally, do they have Friends and Family Support? Do family members or friends live close enough to routinely visit and check up on them?

If you have any concerns, talk openly with your parents. Let them know how much you care about their wellbeing and their independence. Try to agree on solutions that will ensure their dignity and independence.

However, if you suspect or see things that can threaten their safety and independence, do not hesitate to contact their physician and discuss your concerns. While the physician will not discuss your loved ones' health problems without their permission, the doctor can offer advice and recommend other options.

If you have any questions about your health, or the continued health of your loved ones, contact us. Meridian At Home Advisors specialize in listening to your health care concerns and identifying the services and technologies that will allow you or a person close to you to continue to lead a healthy, independent life at home. Our advisors will gladly arrange for a registered nurse to conduct a free, in-home consultative assessment. Call us toll-free at 1-800-894-6885. You can also click on [Connect with Meridian At Home](#) to have one of our advisors contact you at a convenient time. Meridian At Home, Where you want to be.