

✓ **Assure your relative of your love and care**

Many carers feel guilty when their relative says 'I want to go home'. If the decision was made because you could no longer manage at home, it is probably unlikely that you would be able to care for them at home again. Think back to the reasons why your relative went into residential care and why they still need to remain there. When your relative tells you he/she wants to 'go home', respond to their emotional need in an understanding way, assure them they are still loved and wanted.

How does the process impact on me?

As a carer, you may live through a range of emotions throughout the residential placement experience. These may include:

- Guilt
- Vulnerability
- Fear
- Helplessness
- Stress
- Emptiness
- Anger
- Loss and grief

All these reactions are completely normal and many carers feel the same way. Moreover, don't be surprised by the ups and downs of your feelings are after your relative goes into care.

It is important to remember that just because you are no longer doing the majority of the hands-on caring, it doesn't mean that you've lost your right to be involved in your relative's care. Many carers continue to have an active role in caring through regular visits, washing, food preparation, or regular visits back home or family outings where possible. Liaise with the staff, planning and review meetings are other important things that you will continue to perform, particularly in the adjustment period.



How do I readjust after my relative has moved into a residential facility?

Many carers experience a great sense of grief after their relative has moved into residential care. These are some suggestions to help you readjust to changes:

✓ **Acknowledge and attend to your emotions**

Guilt and grief are normal reactions to loss or change in the caring situation as it was. You may feel like you have 'failed' your relative and that you are no longer useful or valued. You may experience a great sense of grief at the loss of the companionship of your relative and the routine you once had. They may be experienced as crying, fear, sadness or other emotions. It will take time for you to work through these emotions, but it is a part of moving into the future. Accept that you have your own limits without judging yourself harshly, you may find that your sense of guilt is reduced.

You may also be angry at your other family members because they did not provide you the support you needed to keep your relative at home. Accept that your other family members also have their own limits and forgive them for not being able to meet your expectations, your sense of anger will reduce.

Do not hesitate to seek help if you are finding it difficult to deal with the emotions alone. Contact **Carers NSW** on **1800 242 636** to talk to a Carer Support Officer and find out more about professional services for you.

✓ **Continue to attend your carer support group**

If you have been attending a carer support group, continue to do so. You are likely to need the support and contacts. Just because your relative has moved into residential care doesn't mean you have to stop going. Find out if there is a support group or meeting for relatives at the facility, you may find it helpful to meet with and talk to relatives of other residents. The 'Carer Support Group' information sheet is also available in your language.

✓ **Think about how you would like your life to be now**

To adjust to such a major change, finding the balance between caring work, your own needs and a social life is important. You may take this opportunity to make some choices about the direction you will go from here. You may like to set up a new routine for yourself, take up new hobbies or interests, or learn new skills.

Remember, there are no rules about how often you need to see or visit your relative, and how you want to be involved in their care. Whatever works best for you and them is probably a good solution. Ultimately, only you can decide what you will be most comfortable with.

If you'd like to talk to someone about adjusting to this new lifestyle, contact **Carers NSW** on **1800 242 636**, our Carer Support Officer will be able to help you.

A fact sheet for Carers:

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The impacts of a residential placement



**Department
of Ageing,
Disability &
Home Care**

The decision for a family member to go into residential care, including nursing homes, hostels, group homes and other types of supported accommodations, usually arises out of necessity. Many carers often think that they would never need to make such a decision; however, continuing to care at home forever is often not possible. You may have become exhausted, isolated and perhaps unwell from your care commitment over time. You may not receive enough help from other family members or community services. You may have neglected your own physical and mental health needs for a long time. It then becomes obvious that you cannot do it all.

The decision is difficult for carers of any age and cultural backgrounds. Whether you are a spouse, child or parent, you may experience a range of emotions, such as guilt, fear, anger, stress, vulnerability, and helplessness. You may feel that you have 'failed' your family, and that people including yourself will judge you negatively. You may worry that your family member will not receive quality care from people other than you. All these emotions are completely normal and many carers feel the same way.

What are the positive aspects of residential care?

Moving into a residential facility does not need to be a negative experience. Some of the positive aspects for your family member may include:

- ✓ **Increased social interaction** with people from the same age group and participation in group activities. This will help to break down isolation and contribute to their mental health.
- ✓ **Improved health and wellbeing** from participation in programs and activities that stimulate mental activities, eg music or art therapy, exercise, etc. Moreover, staff often have knowledge and experienced in monitoring different health conditions for appropriate activities.
- ✓ **Increased comfort and safety** because residential facilities are specially set up to suit special needs and have appropriate equipment. Staff are usually skilled to deal with challenging behaviours and can assist and address to the needs of your relative. Moreover, in the incident of a fall, someone will attend to your relative quickly.
- ✓ **Improved access** to specialists and other services, such as different therapists, dentist, hair dressing, beautician, etc. These for you as the carer mean that you know your relative is getting expert care and is supervised 24/7. It means their dietary, medication, activities, and social needs are looked after. You can stop worrying about attending to these needs, but to spend quality time together. You may also have the opportunity to meet and talk to other carers through meetings.

What should I do to make it work?

- ✓ **Plan ahead**
Involving the person going into care in the process will help smoothing the process for both of you. Moreover, residential facilities usually have a waiting list. If the carer and care recipient are forced into the decision, it can become a time of chaos.

✓ Plan a visit

If you have a facility in mind, contact the manager or coordinator and make an appointment to visit. They will be able to answer your questions. You may want to talk to the Resident's Committee or other family members too. Remember it is the home of the residents. Visit the facility a couple of times before you make a decision.

Some residential facilities are run by ethnic community organisations. Clustering brings together residents who share similar cultural, language or religious background together within one facility. To find out about these services please contact the **Commonwealth Carelink and Carer Respite Centre** on **1800 059 059**.

If you want or need someone to talk to about your decision and feelings, call **Carers NSW** on **1800 242 636**, we provide specialist carer information, emotional support and counselling.

Checklist for choosing a residential facility

What were your very first impressions?

Good Average Poor

Are people welcoming and friendly?

Yes No

Are your questions received positively?

Yes No

Do staff appear to treat residents and their visitors with respect?

Yes No

Is there a good activity program?

Yes No

Does it smell good?

Yes No

Is the lighting and ventilation good?

Yes No

Are there other people with similar needs?

Yes No

Is there a staff member who can speak your language?

Yes No

Is there a policy of culturally appropriate care?

Yes No

Have the staff received cross cultural training?

Yes No

Are there safe and interesting outdoor areas?

Yes No

Are there areas for families to get together

Yes No

Did you receive good written information?

Yes No

Is there a residents or relatives committee?

Yes No

Do they have secured dementia specific facilities?

Yes No

How does the process impact on my relative?

Making the choice themselves

Changing the place of residence is a stressful experience for anyone and takes time for adjustment. For some, this may mean weeks and for others months or even longer.

✓ Try not to be disheartened during the adjustment period

The adjustment period is usually the most difficult for you to deal with. During this time of adjustment, your relative is likely to feel unhappy and/or disorientated, especially if the person has dementia, and needs reassurance that things will get better.

✓ Allow your relative to sort out their emotions

You may feel responsible for taking away the emotional pain of your relative. It is important to allow them to work through their own emotions so they can keep a sense of independence and dignity. Sorting through their own feelings is part of their process of adjustment. You cannot do this for them.