

Visiting a Long-Term Care Facility

By
Judith S. Parnes
LCSW, CMC
Executive
Director



Most of us have visited a friend or relative who no longer lives at home, and who now resides in a “facility” of some type. Regardless of the reason that precipitated the placement, there are many ways to make each visit a pleasant, memorable experience for both you and the resident. If you visit a facility, plan to learn the facility’s policies and procedures. Make it a point to know who provides rect care to the resident. Together, you and the staff can make sure that the resident gets the best possible care by sharing information and even some responsibilities.

The well being of the resident is a concern to both family and friends. If your visit is to be pleasant for both of you, focus energy on the time you have together. Take a cue from the resident when it comes to comfort level at the facility. Listen attentively if the resident has a concern, and then relay this concern to the staff. Your visits to the facility are important to you – the friend or caregiver – because you see how the resident’s needs are being met.

Always remember though, that each visit you make shows the resident that his/her needs, thoughts and

feelings are still important, and that your relationship continues although your caregiving role has changed.

Long-term care residents benefit from your visits in many ways. Remember that the resident has suffered a loss of independence, is separated from his/her home, family and neighborhood, and faces reduced mobility and possible loss of self-esteem and identity.

These visits can add to the resident’s well being by helping him/her adjust emotionally to the new setting. Continuing your relationship with the resident will help the person physically and socially adjust to the new setting and strengthen the person’s faith as well. Furthermore, maintaining regular visits as your schedule allows will assure the resident that someone cares.

The quality of time you spend with a resident is more important than the length of time. And, if you are too far away to visit, telephone calls, letters, postcards, photographs and recorded messages show that you care.

Know the nursing home’s schedule and the resident’s routine, call ahead before you visit, and be on time. Knock on the door of the resident’s room and identify yourself before you enter. Planning ahead will give you the opportunity to gather the things you need to bring, or get you to the facility in time to attend an activity with the resident

Create a positive and caring atmosphere when you walk in the door. Your hug and touch, your talk, your attentive ear and your patience will make the visit memorable to both of you.

Alternate visits when you talk and reminisce with active visits, such as going to religious services, eating out, helping to organize drawers or photograph albums, or bringing grandchildren or great-grandchildren. The list below offers other suggestions for shared activities and interests.

TIPS FOR MAKING MEMORABLE VISITS

- Call ahead, be positive and listen
- Give your undivided attention, give a hug, hold hands, and/or touch an arm
- Bring a favorite flower, magazine, soap, and/or pictures of family and of vacations
- Encourage talk about resident activities, quality time counts
- Help organize drawers or photo albums
- Join resident for a facility activity or lunch
- Go for a ride in the car or go out to lunch, shopping, religious services
- Celebrate a birthday in a special way
- Read aloud, bring an activity, reminisce, complete a family tree
- Help resident write letters or send cards