



Check list for Loved ones: Written by: Caring Companions by Brenda Metal, LLC.

Many adult children live in different homes, towns or even states than their aging parent. Visits may be routine or sporadic depending on distance. Many adult children rely upon phone conversations to evaluate their aging parent's welfare – this often does not tell the whole story. While visits can be a hectic time, it's the perfect time to start a new tradition. Set aside some quiet time to make a "Loved One Checklist". This will provide an opportunity to assess possible safety issues, health decline and behavior changes. Your "Loved One Checklist" will shine a new light on what needs to be done and can be used to set up new patterns for the year to come.

A "Loved One" checklist can include, but is not limited to:

-A review of your parent's medication list-

What has changed – additions (newly prescribed), subtractions (no longer prescribed but still in the cabinet), dosage changes (5 mg twice a day versus 5 mg three times a day), time changes (9AM and 9 PM or take with a meal). Are there bottles of pills that are out of date or no longer needed?

Can this be done on a computer? In a large font? Printed out in calendar format or simply a list? Pills arranged in pill boxes? Can the adult child keep this list on a jump drive so that they can update as their parent goes to doctor visits?

-A review of your parent's physician list

What has changed – who do they go to? How often? For what? Phone numbers? Do they have upcoming appointments? Can you create a calendar specifically for doctor's appointments and when meds need refilled?

-A review of your parent's home

Do smoke detectors have new batteries? Does your parent have a CO2 detector w/ new batteries? Has the dryer vent been cleaned out? Has the furnace filter been changed? Have the gutters been cleaned out? Has the hot water heater been flushed?

Are there chores to be done that might be dangerous for your aging parent to do on their own? High dusting, wall washing, curtain washing, sweeping behind couches and beds?

-A review of your parents finances

Are the taxes paid? Are the utilities paid? Are their accounts up to date and accurate? Are there investments or accounts that need regular maintenance or decision making?

Is this a good time to discuss protecting your parent's assets? Do they have pre-paid burial arrangements or life insurance policies?

Do they have a will? Do they have a safety deposit box? Do they have a fire proof box for important documents or at least a specific place where records are kept? How are their records organized? Where are their ID cards and insurance cards?

-A review of your parent's healthcare decision making choices

Do they have a living will? Do they have a formal power of attorney? Does it cover both medical and financial? Have they named a surrogate decision maker? What hospital do they prefer?

-A review of your parent's support structure

Who can your aging parent depend on for help? Is there a close neighbor, relative or friend that they can call in case of an emergency? Do they have an emergency response device (i.e. Lifeline)? Do they have someone to clean snow off of sidewalks, cut grass, bring in groceries in inclement weather? Do they receive meals on wheels? Do they have a church group or senior center that they are active in and is there a contact person? Do you have a list of these people so that you can contact them if needed?

Making a "Home for the Holidays Checklist" will allow you to identify your aging parent's needs, familiarize yourself with their situation and make suggestions to help them maintain their independence. Making the checklist may reveal changes in mental status and their ability to organize and accurately remember. Once you've started the list you can easily update it when you visit and in some cases over the phone. Starting the "Home for the Holidays Checklist" creates a baseline for the adult child and a way to measure changes from visit to visit.

Remember that when you're making the list you should do so in a way that respects your aging parent's dignity and need for autonomy. It is important to discuss the current situation and make suggestions that involve collaboration rather than the child simply assuming control. Keep in mind that it is often difficult to accept help and that it should be presented as a way to remain safe and independent. When reviewing your aging parent's situation remember that there are in home services that can assist with everyday chores, physician visits, etc. A service like this is an extension of your aging parent's family and involves caregivers who often become friends.

For more information please contact Caring Companions at 724 337-7581 or visit us at www.stayathomecare.net.