

# Memory Moment

## Making Your Home Dementia Friendly

By Amy Sobrino, MSW, LCSW

We want our homes to feel safe, secure, and welcoming and spend a lot of time and resources to organize and set them up to meet our needs. For a person living with dementia and their families, having a safe, secure, and functional home is even more important but can often be a neglected part of treatment and management of the disease. When we think about progressive dementia as a processing impairment, senses like vision, hearing, etc. are affected as well as orientation (knowing where we are or who we are with) and initiation (being able to start an activity successfully). A dementia-friendly home can help manage these changes by setting up a person living with dementia for success and helping them maintain abilities as much as possible. We'll go through common areas of a dementia-friendly home and resources to help get you started. Most of these dementia-friendly home solutions are inexpensive and easy to implement.

Key aspects of a dementia-friendly home include:

### -Prompting routine and activity

As mentioned above, activity and routine can often be challenging for a person living with dementia to maintain. Hobbies and interests may not appeal or be too challenging to complete. It may be challenging to follow a set routine, resulting in a lot of naps or missed meals/medications. Having visual reminders around the house such as whiteboards, simple day calendars, or simple clocks can help orient someone to the appropriate day, time, and task.

Many people living with dementia benefit from having activities like puzzles, arts/crafts, photo albums, etc. out where they are able to see. This helps give a visual cue of activity rather than them having to find items and initiate an activity on their own.

### -Promoting safety

There are many safety risks associated with dementia. With any disease management, we try to be as proactive as possible rather than reactive. Items like door chimes/alarms or locks can help with wandering prevention, a common issue with dementia. Simple contrast like lining thresholds and steps with color contrasting tape can help compensate for vision changes and reduce falls. There are modifications to help reduce likelihood of kitchen accidents, including automatic stove/microwave shut-offs, flame retardant discs to put above the stovetop, and locks. Many families choose to use an electronic monitoring system with cameras and sensors to help understand safety risks and activity needs. These devices can greatly support people living with dementia who are living alone.

Resources to help make your home dementia-friendly:

Memory Care Home Solutions has a great video of their dementia friendly home training venue. They educate the viewer on simple modifications and gadgets that can help compensate for dementia changes. Check out their Youtube channel at Memory Care Home Solutions. The specific video link

is <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eV75WdcNC4> and is titled 'MCHS Virtual Tour'. Alzheimer's Foundation of America has a great dementia friendly guide titled 'The Apartment' available on their website at <https://alzfdn.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/The-Apartment-Guide-web.pdf>.

*Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness (EAAA) is a volunteer-run, not-for-profit organization founded to provide education and support to all families, caregivers, and people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementia in Effingham County and the surrounding area. For more information about Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness, check out the website at [www.effinghamalz.org](http://www.effinghamalz.org). If you are a caregiver & have specific questions or situations you would like information on, please feel free to call Shannon Nosbisch at 217-663-0010 or Amy Sobrino at 618-363-8372.*