



THE DEVOTED DAUGHTER'S *Home for the Holiday's* Checklist

Have you been thinking about what the future looks like for your parents?

With the holidays upon us, this is a time for celebrations and family get-togethers. It also may be the first time you've seen your folks in a while, and an excellent opportunity to see how things are going.

1 *Enjoy Your Time Together*

First and foremost make the most of your time with your family. While caregiving, I found myself too focused on checking if my mom was okay, then rushing out to my next appointment. Take the time to enjoy each moment and be present, especially if you're coming in from out of town. You won't always have this opportunity.

Observe

Observe the day to day activity in your parents home. If they have never been terribly organized, a disorganized home is likely normal. But if your mom was always a stickler for cleanliness and the home is a disaster, this may be a sign something isn't right.

3 *Make a List*

As you observe, start making a list of things that may need future attention. Consider things like:

- Is the home maintained? Housework done, pets cared for?
- Is it safe? Are there tripping hazards? Smoke detectors are working?
- Are there any assistive devices that should be installed?
- Are they still driving? Are there any concerns?
- Has one of your parents declined in some way? We often see that one person compensates for the other's weakness. For example, one may drive and the other prepares meals.

4 *Start the Conversation*

Once you have a list, don't just sit your parents down and throw everything onto your parents all at once. It's a process, and it is their home after all. Know they may become defensive when bringing up changes. Test the waters. Offer something small such as checking the smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. If more serious changes need to be made for safety bring up the conversation at a more appropriate time.

- Chose a time where there are no distractions and your adult is most amiable
 - Create a neutral environment
 - Be prepared to listen and make compromises
 - Keep in mind what is realistic, but also their wishes
 - Have your points ready
 - Ask, don't tell
 - Don't be afraid to back off and reassess
 - End the conversation on a positive note
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5 *Get Up to Date on Insurance*

What medical insurance coverage do your parents have in place? Do you see stacks of paperwork from doctors offices or recent hospital visits? It can be overwhelming for anyone, especially a senior. Ask if you can go over this together. Try and create a conversation that is relatable for example, "This is so confusing for me, I finally had to have Jon help me."

6 Organize Medical Documents

Do they have a current medication list? Do you know what pharmacy they use and the name of their primary doctor? This is something that may take some investigation, but it is so important to have the correct medication list on file especially in an emergency.

7 Have an Emergency Plan

What would happen in case of an emergency? Do they have a plan? If not, this is something you may want to discuss. Do you have the current list of phone numbers for primary contacts including doctors, neighbors, friends and family members? You may even check their phones and make sure all the emergency phone numbers are added to their phones and that they are familiar with how to access the information.

8 Organize Financial Affairs

Have your parents talked about the future of their financial affairs? If not, can you or someone you know suggest a meeting sometimes shortly? Maybe even just getting started on a medical power of attorney what would happen if they were unable to speak for themselves? Do you know their wishes?

While this checklist likely won't cover everything, it will give you a place to start. Throughout this experience try not to bombard your parents or yourself! The holidays can be a stressful time in general, so take breaks and enjoy yourself.

We all hear the word self-care, but consider what that means to you. even the smallest thing like taking a walk, listening to a podcast or have coffee with a friend can re-fill your cup.

Warm holiday wishes,
The Devoted Daughter

