

Please, please consider giving half a day just once a month. Call us at 385-2175 to set up a brief and easy orientation.

Leaving your Loved One Home Alone

If you are a caregiver to someone with dementia, you will no doubt have many questions to ponder as you decide upon the prospects of leaving a loved one in the early stages of dementia home alone:

- Will they attempt to go outside?
- Will they hurt themselves?
- Will they need emergency assistance?
- Will they forget that the stove is on?

This difficult question involves you the caregiver, and your loved one, who was once an independent person. Both of you will probably disagree with the situation, as it is normal for caregivers to feel their loved one cannot be alone, while loved ones believe they are fine and healthy enough to be alone for however long. Asking other family members, health care professionals, and other caregivers for advice will go a long way to determining the likelihood of their safety being jeopardized when left alone.

- Can they distinguish friends and family from strangers if they are faced with answering the door or having someone enter the home?
- If they are hungry, can they prepare and eat a meal without your assistance?
- Is it easy for them to use the bathroom without your help, or do they require aid every time? Are there any other plans in place if they are not able to go to the bathroom without your help?
- How does their behavior and temperament change from when you leave to when you return? Do they appear angered or scared at the first sign of you leaving the house?
- In case of emergency are they able to leave the home and seek shelter outside?
- Are they aware of smoke alarms and unusual noises, which may trigger danger, or are they likely to overlook all such noises?
- Are they likely to wander off and get lost easily?
- Are they routinely experiencing emergencies, which places their life in jeopardy? Do they suffer from epilepsy, or shortness of breath that may need to be monitored all the time?
- Do they get lonely easily and feel deserted at the slightest moment of your absence?
- Can they be destructive at times of stress and sickness and cause damage to themselves and your home in the process?

Depending on your answers to these questions, your decision on the possibility of leaving your loved one home alone should be clearer. If your answers gave you a sense of dissatisfaction, it is in your best interest to find assistance through a family member or home care aide who can stay with them while you are gone. But if the answers to the questions were comforting, you may still be able to leave your loved one alone, although you must regularly check up on their progress to ensure their safety in the future. This is certainly not an easy situation for



Some important questions to consider in the decision include:

- Are they capable of calling 911 or neighbors if an emergency occurs?