



Aging in Place

Dementia Home Improvement

At Helping Hands Living Solutions, our dedicated professionals will work closely with you, to craft solutions that meet your needs within your budget. To effectively help someone with dementia, we will focus on their well-being, understanding their individual needs and preferences, and providing a supportive and structured environment. This includes maintaining a safe and familiar home, and engaging them in everyday home activities.

Our experience at Helping Hands Living Solutions has taught us that every situation is unique, and that all solutions should be approached with respect and understanding. When we are asked to provide a site visit for a customer with dementia, we make several observations, and actually use checklists to ensure we try to match the best solutions for each unique visit.

My observations for a dementia visit would first be an overall observation of clutter. We would advise that you should look to become more and more of a minimalist as the stages of dementia progress. Less clutter will result in a more relaxed atmosphere. Also let's widen all walking paths by moving and removing furniture. Helping Hands will perform these clutter removal tasks, as well as moving and storage tasks as 'charge as we go Time and Materials Services'.

ADAPTING THE HOME TO THE CHANGES BROUGHT ON BY DEMENTIA

Dementia is a progressive condition, meaning its symptoms worsen over time. While the progression of dementia can vary, it is often described in stages to understand the typical changes.

Early Stage (Mild Dementia):

Symptoms are often subtle, such as memory lapses, difficulty with problem-solving, and changes in mood. The person can often still function independently.

Middle Stage Moderate

Dementia: Symptoms become more noticeable and impact daily tasks, requiring assistance with personal care. This stage is often the longest. Changes include increased confusion, forgetfulness, and behavioral changes.

Late Stage (Severe Dementia):

In this final stage, the person needs full-time assistance with all aspects of daily living. Symptoms include inability to communicate, loss of physical abilities, and incontinence.

Helping Hands Living Solutions will help develop a plan for home upgrades as dementia challenges progress, and needs change.



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**Helping
Hands**
LIVING SOLUTIONS

Aging in Place Dementia Home Improvement

Dementia significantly impacts a person's life at home, affecting various aspects of their daily routines, safety, relationships, and overall well-being. Helping Hands Living Solutions can assist in creating a supportive home environment. It is important to remember that dementia affects each person differently, and the specific challenges and needs will vary depending on the stage and type of dementia. Open communication, patience, understanding, and seeking support are essential for navigating the impact of dementia at home.

Our focus during a dementia site visit would then turn to the walls, floors, and ceilings. I want to see contrasting colors, and nothing that appears overly busy in any patterns or textures. Dark colors for doorframes against light colored walls. We would also recommend to contrast light switches to walls and install toggles that light up.

For a person living with dementia, making changes to their home environment can significantly improve their safety, comfort, and ability to function independently

While we look at enhancing the visibility, we would also be thinking about reducing noise. Walking across tile or plank flooring can be loud and made even louder by hearing aids and some symptoms of dementia. Sounds that cannot be muffled may be smoothed by music or white noise devices. We want to build an environment that does not overwhelm.

Mirrors in the house would be noted, sometimes they can disorientate, or the reflection is misunderstood as an intruder. Also, at night we want blinds or curtains to close to remove reflections from the glass. Where we have glass doors, we would recommend an eye level decal to provide an awareness aid.

Speaking of misunderstandings, we would also ask that guns, knives, or other obvious dangerous weapons be removed or restricted. Prepare for any emergencies with ready phone numbers and alerting tools to inform of trouble. Helping Hands Living Solutions works to sensitively address the balance of independence and needs of our customers.



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While we perform a walk-through of a home assessment for a dementia sufferer, we would be looking closely at the security of the home. Normal entrances and exits will need a strategy for security based on the needs of the customer, with an awareness that the needs will change. Windows will also need to be secured to ensure they do not become an exit. Also, we would be looking at interior door locks on bedrooms and bathrooms, and discuss at what point these locks need to be removed or disabled.

Another place to look would be at closets and large furniture. We should be mindful of the possibility that these items may be climbed, and that securing furniture is a must. Also, closets should be arranged so that the normally needed items are readily available at eye level, and that these storage spaces needed to be simplified and organized. Once again we do not want the closet to overwhelm, but have smartly ordered and labeled contents.

Memory aids are an important consideration in the later stages of dementia. We would recommend the use of signs, labels, and symbols to help with navigation and memory. Labels and signs on cupboards and doors can be helpful, such as a toilet sign on the bathroom door. Notes placed at certain points around the home, such as a note next to the front door saying, "check for your keys", can serve as useful reminders.

Dementia-Friendly Items

- **Clocks with large LCD displays; day, date, time**
- **Telephones and remote controls with big buttons**
- **Reminder devices that provide an audio prompt**

Helping Hands Living Solutions would recommend that you take a tour of your house, looking at it from your loved one's compromised point of view. Dementia affects balance, cognitive abilities, coordination, depth perception, memory, and strength. People with the disease have difficulty adapting to change, accurately interpreting the world around them, making sound choices, and understanding instructions. Your understanding of the normal home environment will assist identifying where solutions are needed.



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When Helping Hands Living Solutions comes to your home to consult, another item we will look for as we pass through the home is to assess the lighting.

With dementia, changes in the level of light can be disorienting. Natural lighting is always ideal, but then blinds need to deploy at night to reduce reflections. Shadows should be avoided due to the possibility to appear as wells or something that needs to be navigated. Try to reduce glare as well. Motion sensing night lights should be installed in bedrooms, hallways, bathrooms, really anywhere and everywhere.

We are sorry to say that removing plants and at some point animals will have to be considered. Magnets could be mistaken as food, and any fake fruits should be removed. A garbage disposal and all appliance access in later stages will need to be addressed by removal or possibly a smart lock.

Changes with Dementia

Dementia will cause changes in the body and brain

- **Judgement**-forget how everyday items work
- **Sense of time and place**-getting lost and losing track of time
- **Behavior**-confusion, suspicion, or fear
- **Physical ability**-balance, strength, dizziness
- **Senses**-changes in vision, hearing, sensitivity to temperature or depth perception

SMART HOME ASSISTANTS

The evolution of the Smart Home has provided multiple solutions to help automate and monitor the home. A "smart home for dementia care" refers to a home environment that uses technology to help people with dementia live more independently and safely, while also providing support and ease for caregivers. This can involve a range of devices and systems, from automated lighting and appliances to sensors and wearable trackers, all designed to monitor activity, provide reminders, and alert caregivers to potential issue. A smart home for dementia care might include:

- Smart locks for the doors
- Motion sensors that alert
- Smart plugs to provide power controls
- Doorbell cameras
- Smart Lighting
- Security cameras
- Voice-Activated Assistants
- Medication reminders
- Wearable devices
- Video call devices



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Aging in Place Dementia Home Improvement

When addressing the needs for dementia Helping Hands Living Solutions would begin to think room by room to address unique considerations of dementia as well as mobility and quality of life for aging in place. Mobility assistive devices such as stair-lifts, ramps, lift chairs, mobility scooters, and power wheelchairs are all considerations that we can provide. In each room we consider:

Kitchen Modification – Temperature-controlled and motion-activated water faucets; monitor for food age; disconnect the garbage disposal; remove knives, nutcrackers and skewers; smart control the microwave; store hazardous items in locked cabinets; consider appliances with auto shut-off

Bathroom Modifications – Grab bars; raised toilet; step-in shower; non-slip mats; medication dispensers; adhesive coatings in wet areas; cover unused electrical outlets; shower stool; shower wand with handle pause; remove locks from door; walk-in showers

Bedroom Modification – Provide a chair for changing; bed rails; use a bedroom monitoring device and intercom; caution with heating pads / electric blankets; motion activated night lights; consider removing door lock

Outdoor Modification – Cracked pavement and uneven surfaces need addressed; improve lighting; install fences; monitor garage doors; mark edges of steps; remove clutter

HELPING HANDS LIVING SOLUTIONS RECOMMENDS

Overall, try to create a living environment that is open and pleasant. The home should encourage independence and social interaction. One of the items that we have spent our time focused on is the use of Smart Home Assistants such as Amazon Alexa and Google Nest to be our helping hands when we cannot be there. The technology can be a little tough at first, but we want to help you understand the capabilities and how to take advantage of them. Smart Home brings a lot of safety and security options with the advantage of being very entertaining.

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