



# TIPS FOR FINDING A VALIDATION-INFORMED LONG-TERM CARE HOME FOR YOUR PARENTS/GRANDPARENTS

---

There is a lot of [advice available to relatives who are searching for a long-term residential facility](#) for older family members who need more care than can be provided at home. What is more **difficult** to find, are places that have integrated the Validation principles and use the method.

In a nutshell you want a place that does the following:

- **Treat each person as a unique and worthwhile individual:** Do the carers address the resident in a respectful way and talk to him/her and not just to you?
- **Respect the resident's choices:** What sort of questions are asked on 'intake'? Do they take a full, personal history and make special notes on the person's preferences, for example, usual bed time, wake up time, favorite meal, etc.
- **Increase the person's feelings of self-worth and well-being:** Do the other residents look cared for and spoken to with respect (addressed as Mr. Smith rather than John). Carers show respect in every interaction with residents, even when they are expressing strong emotions.
- **Treat 'challenging behavior' as a form of communication and an expression of basic human needs:** Ask how staff are trained to handle residents when they are pacing, pounding, or yelling. How are they trained to work with people who have withdrawn or stopped talking?
- **Not use chemical or physical restraints:** How does this community define physical restraints and under what conditions are they used/removed? What percentage of the residents receive sedation or anti-psychotic medications to keep them calm?

*Here are more questions and things to notice in order to ensure that all residents are being treated with Validation principles and values.*

---

## **Treat each person as a unique and worthwhile individual**

Are residents addressed in a respectful way? Notice the voice tone that the carers use.

*In a Validation-informed community:* The carer begins by addressing the resident as Mr. Smith instead of John, and then ask what name he prefers to be called by. Giving a person the choice is more respectful.

The carer's tone of voice should be adult-to-adult, not directive, overly happy or condescending.

When visiting the facility, the staff talk directly to the prospective resident, not just to you?

---

## **Respect the resident's choices**

What information is gathered BEFORE the person moves into the community/facility?

*In a Validation informed community:* The intake form includes favorite music, preferred snacks and drinks, a full social history, not just medical information, and information about the resident's preferred routines throughout the day and night-

Staff know what time the person likes to wake up and go to bed, etc. And these choices are respected. The person can wake up at 5am or noon. The person may go to bed at midnight or whenever they prefer. There are activities in these non-peak times for them, even during the night if their routine is to be awake during the night. Also, the person's room is decorated in a personalized way including items from home.

---

## **Increase the person's feelings of self-worth and well-being**

*In a Validation-informed community:*

- Direct care staff know the history and life story of the people they care for.
- Direct care staff get on eye-level and make eye contact when talking with residents.
- Direct care staff don't get too close or remain too far away when talking with residents.
- You don't see direct care staff rush around. There is a feeling of having enough time.
- You see staff members talking with residents in a conversational way.

Residents appear to be treated with dignity. They appear to be well cared for- cleanly shaved, hair and nails are clean, clothing and shoes are clean and look comfortable. Dignified covering for clothing – clothing protectors and not bibs- during meals (if needed). Residents in memory care receive the same meal choices as those in assisted living. Finger foods and modified diets are offered if needed.

---

## **Treat 'challenging behavior' as a form of communication and an expression of basic human needs.**

What do staff call pacing, pounding, crying or yelling? Are these described as 'challenging behaviors', 'distressing behaviors' or as a form of communication and an expression of basic human needs?

Ask how staff handle people who get angry, cry a lot or wander the halls?

If you can, ask what staff members are trying to accomplish with their interactions in these situations?

*In a Validation-informed community:* A Validation-informed carer will respectfully engage with the person and try to better understand the reason behind the behavior. Validation-informed carers will try to meet the needs of the resident in the moment instead of trying to calm them down.

---

## **Not use chemical or physical restraints**

Ask what percentage of the residents are given sedatives or psychotropic medications (chemical restraints).

If your relative is already taking medication to calm them down, what is the community's view on reducing that medication?

Under what circumstances are residents given these medications?

How are these medications stopped or are they given indefinitely?

How does this facility define 'physical restraints'? Does that include bed rails? Geri-chairs?

Under what circumstances are residents restrained?

How long are these restraints used?

What is used alternatively to avoid chemical or physical restraints?

*In a Validation-informed community:* Physical restraints are not used and the use of chemical restraints is minimized because there are other ways of helping the person to express themselves and still stay safe. Self-determination is a priority because that gives the resident dignity, self-respect, self-worth and feelings of well-being.

---

## **Additionally:**

Understand the community's philosophy of care and how it aligns with your loved one's needs and preferences. Validation emphasizes respect and creating relationships based on empathetic communication, which creates a supportive and nurturing environment for individuals. There should be a written philosophy of care that can be clearly articulated.

Ask about staff training, continuing education and implementation of a program. Is there a specific program or method that is integrated into all aspects of care and activities? How often is training offered?

The single most important element in person-centered care is the carer. Training of direct care staff in the basic Validation attitude should be mandatory. This goes beyond offering an array of activities during the day, it should also include every interaction between a carer and a resident including assistance with basic care.

**Family Support:** Ask what programs or training they have to support your family. Do they have support groups or will they help you find a local resource. How are families kept informed of their loved one's ongoing well-being? How are families integrated into daily life in the home?

---

## In Closing:

Choosing a memory care community is a significant decision that requires careful consideration of various factors, including the approach to care provided and the methods used to support residents with memory loss. By asking the right questions and gaining an understanding of validation and other approaches, you can make an informed choice that promotes the health, happiness, and dignity of your loved one.

The video embedded in the logo below demonstrates these tips for what you want to see in a Validation Informed community.

See an experienced validator communicating with an angry resident.

Gain insight into alternative ways of responding to so called 'challenging behavior' and how Validation can help an older adult who is expressing a lot of anger.

This real-life scene can help you make decisions about finding a long-term care community for your loved one.

Click the logo below to watch this instructional video (6 minutes)

