



Dementia-Friendly Home



The **Alzheimer's Foundation of America** created this apartment in New York to fully illustrate how an individual can live independently for longer with only basic changes. The free article is called **The Apartment, A Guide to Creating a Dementia-Friendly Home**. This is a great article (16 pages) with many well-thought-out solutions or choices for folks living with dementia. These solutions are great for an apartment and living alone, but many of them are great choices for couples or families. The AFA (Alzheimer's Foundation of America) has done a great job and I wanted to share some of their ideas with you. Let's get started:

Overall Features:

There are lots of studies on how the color on our walls effect our mood or feelings. Blue (not the in your face color blue), but a mid-tone to soft tone. Blue is a calm color and that's how it makes you feel. I just realized my office color is a soft blue and it always makes me feel welcome. But think about how color can help define an area. Blue walls make the door (whether white or brown) stand out. And that's what you want, there is no guessing where the door is because there is contrast. If you have a white table, then plates that contrast well (not a pale yellow) make it easier to find the food. I happen to dislike the color black or navy for my plates and don't like the look of food on those colors. Think about it, white rice or pasta just don't look appetizing on those colors. Think

about your own preferences for plates and looking at food choice. Some colors of plates just do not make food appetizing. If in doubt, try some paper plates of different colors and see if your loved one's favorite food is as appetizing to them on each color. If white is the best color, then look for a contrast color for a placemat or tablecloth. When you find the right color in a paper plate, then invest in a set of plates in the right color for your person. Good research means better results. Could their fondness for a color change? Sure! Be prepared to try different colors later. Keeping our folks interested in eating well is a great goal – who knew that color could help us on our way.

And beyond eating color contrast, think about wall color influencing depth perception and spatial orientation. Navigating negatively in your space and stumbling or bumping into things are examples of depth perception and spatial orientation problems. Not everyone exhibits these symptoms, talk with your doctor if your family member is showing these signs. Also consider the colors where your person shows greater signs of problems. One gentleman I knew had a really hard time finding the toilet and there was a color complication. His sister told me they changed the wall color from white to a near red and he could then independently find it. The walls had been white, the toilet was white, and the floor was white. His depth perception was changed, and he just couldn't find it, now he can. It sounds so simple and for some it is, but this solution doesn't work for everyone. But it is worth looking into.

Lighting: I've seen many articles about using blue light devices before bed because it can affect your sleep. The blue light stimulates the brain, increases alertness, and elevates energy

levels. I'm more cautious about using my tablet just before bed now. But did you know that our light bulbs can have some of the same effect? This is a simple problem that can be assisted by changing the light bulbs. There are light bulbs that mimic outside. During the day the bulbs emit blue light (energizing) and during the evening they emit a soft yellowish light (soothing). Some of these fancy lightbulbs can be controlled by smart technology – phones and tablets – at a distance by a caregiver. Others can be programmed. Smart home technology has come around to controlling lights and the type of light they emit. Happy adventures in trying this type of solution.

Never fear our night lights even make an appearance here. Some are electric but others are battery operated which means those can be placed low in the hallways or rooms to give safe travels during the middle of the night. It might be a good idea to put new batteries on your shopping list every few months so you have a supply when those battery-loving devices will continue to work.

Décor: I bet you didn't think I would bring up pictures or magazines in this topic, but here it is! Family pictures from the past and magazines from bygone past can be very comforting. The Life or Look magazines on a coffee table give comfort to someone who doesn't remember yesterday but they do remember Bob Hope and all the good things he did. Think about your person and consider what they would like to see sitting around. Other wall pictures could have calming choices to soothe and not agitate our person. Not all pictures need to change at once, if a picture has been on the wall in a family home for over 30 years, now is probably not the

time to change it. If this is a new living arrangement, then picking soothing is a terrific idea. Seascapes anyone?

Temperature:

Perhaps you are considering putting in a smart thermostat to monitor a loved one's environment. Both Google Nest and other app-controlled thermostats are available to handle at a distance (or from the same location) changes to indoor temperature. I hesitate to name too many since new ones come out often. Checking with your big box hardware store will give you plenty to consider plus what you need in place to make use of them. Other things can also be done with some of the virtual assistant devices like setting up individual reminders or ongoing reminders – such as Google Assistant or Amazon Echo/Alexa. They are making it easier for everyone to “talk” to their devices.

One of the features of the new bed technology is to check online when someone goes to bed, when they get up during the night and how often, and when they rise in the morning. No more guessing if someone is getting good quality sleep and when they are roaming the house.

I thought we would get further into The Apartment article to discuss more choices, but they will wait till another day.

Have questions? Please contact us by phone or email (see below).

[For those of you reading this outside the Lower Shore of Maryland – please contact your local Area Agency on Aging for assistance.]

Be well. Take care of you!



Give us a call or email and we will be glad to answer questions about the resources we have. **Please call** and ask at 410-742-0505, ext. 118 – Cindy Robinson **Or, email** Janet Parke at jparke@macinc.org

Let us know if you would like to receive this weekly Information Newsletter in your email. We will be glad to send it to you. Send an email to llewis@macinc.org Janet Parke, with over 25 years' experience working with people with disabilities

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