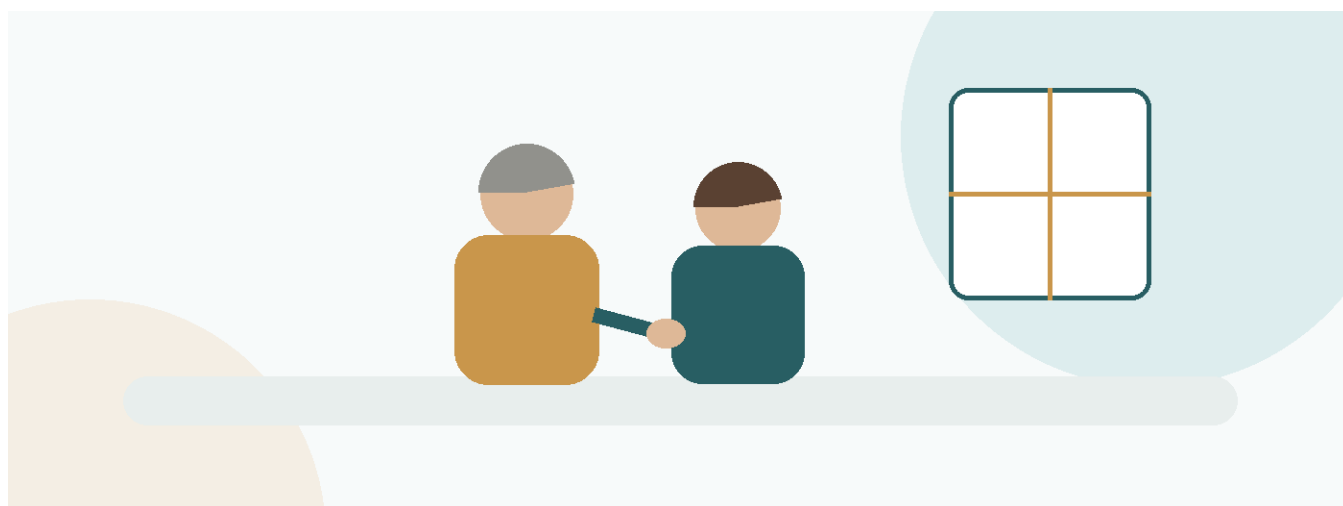


Something Has Changed — What Am I Noticing?

Noticing change without jumping to conclusions

GUIDE 1

Warm, practical guidance
for adult children & families



A warm, practical guide for adult children and families

Start with what you can see

Sometimes the first sign that a parent may need more support is not a crisis. It may be a collection of small things: unopened mail, a nearly empty refrigerator, a missed appointment, a home that is harder to keep up, or a parent who seems less connected than usual.

One change by itself may mean very little. The goal is not to diagnose your parent or decide that they can no longer manage on their own. The goal is simply to notice patterns and understand where everyday life may be becoming harder.

Look across everyday life

Over the next few visits or conversations, pay attention to several areas rather than focusing on a single incident.

- Meals and nutrition — Is food available? Does your parent seem to be eating regularly?
- Personal care — Have grooming, clothing, or hygiene habits changed noticeably?
- Home — Are cleaning, laundry, repairs, yard work, or clutter becoming difficult to manage?

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- Transportation — Are there new concerns about driving, getting to appointments, or running errands?
- Appointments and medications — Are appointments being missed or routines becoming difficult to keep organized?
- Mobility — Have you noticed falls, unsteadiness, difficulty with stairs, or trouble moving around the home?
- Paperwork — Is mail piling up? Are ordinary bills or forms becoming overwhelming?
- Social connection — Is your parent seeing people, participating in activities, and staying connected?
- Memory and thinking — Are you noticing repeated confusion, unusual decisions, or changes that are affecting everyday life?
- Mood and behavior — Does your parent seem markedly different from their usual self?

Describe, don't label

Try writing down what you actually observed. “Dad had three unpaid utility notices on the counter” is more useful than “Dad can't manage his finances anymore.” “Mom said she stopped driving at night because she cannot see as well” tells you more than “Mom shouldn't drive.”

Specific observations make later conversations gentler and more productive because you can talk about a real difficulty rather than making a judgment about your parent's independence.

Look for patterns

Ask yourself: Is this new? Is it happening repeatedly? Is it making an everyday task harder? Is there a simple explanation? Has someone else noticed the same thing?

If you live far away, your picture may be incomplete. With your parent's permission, trusted relatives, friends, neighbors, or others who see them regularly may help you understand whether a change is occasional or becoming a pattern.

A gentle next step

Choose one or two observations that concern you most and have a calm conversation with your parent. You do not need to arrive with solutions. Start by listening.

A useful opening can be as simple as: “I've noticed getting groceries seems to be more of a hassle lately. How has that been going for you?”

The first goal is understanding, not taking control.

When to involve a professional

Changes involving health, significant confusion, repeated falls, major weight change, or other concerning physical or mental changes deserve appropriate professional attention. If there is an immediate medical or safety emergency, seek emergency help rather than relying on a guide or checklist.

ROLAND'S TAKEAWAY

“You do not have to decide today whether your parent “needs care.” Start with a smaller question: What has changed, and what has become harder? Clear observations give your family a much better place to begin.”

A NOTE FROM ANCHOR

This guide is educational and is intended to help families organize their thinking and prepare for conversations. It is not medical, legal, financial, mental-health, or professional care-management advice. For health, safety, legal, financial, or other professional concerns, contact an appropriately qualified professional.

TRUSTED RESOURCES & FURTHER READING

Anchor developed this guide as original educational guidance informed by established caregiving resources. We encourage families to visit these organizations directly for additional information.

- **National Institute on Aging — Does an Older Adult in Your Life Need Help?**
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/caregiving/does-older-adult-your-life-need-help>
- **National Institute on Aging — Getting Started With Caregiving**
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/caregiving/getting-started-caregiving>
- **National Institute on Aging — Services for Older Adults Living at Home**
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/caregiving/services-older-adults-living-home>
- **National Institute on Aging — Sharing Caregiving Responsibilities**
<https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/caregiving/sharing-caregiving-responsibilities>
- **AARP — New to Family Caregiving? 10 Tips on How to Get Started**
<https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/basics/how-to-be-a-caregiver.html>
- **Family Caregiver Alliance — Caregiving 101: On Being a Caregiver**
<https://www.caregiver.org/resource/caregiving-101-being-caregiver/>