



## Getting Family on the Same Page

Caring for your aging parents can be stressful, especially when they are struggling with dementia. What makes this season even more difficult is that often more than one person is making caregiving decisions. While siblings and family members can be a great source of support during the caregiving journey, if everyone is not on the same page, they can be an even more significant source of stress. Having to take care of a parent who can no longer care for <sup>themselves</sup> is emotional. Caregiving is one of the hardest things you will experience in life, and each person handles it differently. There is no clear path on how to handle the practical, emotional, and financial issues that come with caring for an aging parent. Navigating this responsibility with your siblings is part of the challenge and can result in conflict. However, with some intentionality and proactive action, family quarrels can be minimized or avoided, which will ensure time, energy, and resources can be effectively used to provide the best care for your loved one. The best way to get family all on the same page is to hold a family meeting. This should happen as early as possible. Throughout the caregiving journey, you should meet regularly and maintain open lines of communication. A face-to-face meeting provides your family with a chance to discuss what your parent's current needs are and decide who can take on specific tasks. Meetings are also great opportunities to establish essential roles, like what will be done in case of an emergency. Here are a few tips to ensure that you hold a successful family meeting.

**HOPE**  
*for Dementia is here*

### WP MC Leadership Team

Executive Director  
**Ben Leavell**

Director of Clinical Services  
**Melinda Haight**

Director of Recreational Therapy  
**Angie Russo**

Admissions Counselor  
**Kris Hartney**

Director of Food Service  
**Chef Justin Ely**

Director of Housekeeping & Laundry  
**Tim Vesterfelt**

Maintenance  
**Brian Nienhuis & Dave Horjus**

Front Desk Lead  
**Martha Kitler**



**August 2019**

**Involve Everyone** You can only have a productive meeting if everyone is present. Find a time that works with everyone's schedules and reserve enough time to ensure you can cover all necessary topics. Set a meeting time, date, location, and purpose well in advance, so no one has an excuse not to be prepared. Use video calls, like Facetime, to include out-of-town family members. It is vital that everyone feels that their voice is heard. While it's natural for one sibling to facilitate the meeting, if it is perceived that they're trying to "take control," it can cause resentment from family members who feel like they are not involved in the process. All feelings and thoughts are applicable and should be acknowledged.

**Define a Purpose** Calling a meeting with no purpose will not benefit anyone. Make sure everyone knows what will be discussed, especially if it is a sensitive issue. Organizing what will be discussed at the meeting, will provide structure and ensure that the necessary topics are covered. Consider carving out time to discuss daily caregiving needs, financial concerns, what support is needed, and what will need to be done as the illness progresses. Be sure to reserve time for family members to share their feelings.

**Assess the Situation** Before attending the meeting, take a moment to analyze the current caregiving situation. Consider anything in the care plan that should be changed and if everything is working well. Bring any issues and concerns you have with you to the meeting to be discussed and encourage your family members to do the same. By addressing issues up front, it can result in less conflict later on.

**Be Sensitive** Discussing the topic of caregiving, especially for a parent or loved one, is emotional. While these meetings are necessary, they can add "fuel to the fire" and causes emotions to run even higher. Respect each other's feelings and be kind in the way you approach the discussion. Being abrasive and demanding is never appropriate or useful.

**Recap and Document** Before the meeting ends, make sure that everyone understands what the next steps are. Consider what issues are present and how everyone is feeling. To recap, reaffirm action items each family members are responsible for. Send an email summary to the group after the meeting to document the meeting and agreed-upon next steps.

Caring for a parent is emotional, but it can be even more difficult when the whole family is involved. Take the time to ensure everyone is engaged and that everyone's opinion is heard. Regular family meetings will ensure that everyone stays on the same page and will develop a strong support system. Need help? We know that stepping into the caregiver role can be demanding.

To help you on the caregiver journey or schedule a free, private consultation by contacting Waterford Place counselor Kris Hartney at 616-667-6000 or [khartney@sunsetmanor.org](mailto:khartney@sunsetmanor.org).

Waterford Place Memory Care integrates SAIDO Leaning® with a Montessori based life style and an industry leading 6:1 direct care staffing ratio.

**Questions? Would you like a tour?**

Please contact Kris Hartney,  
Admissions Counselor.  
[khartney@sunsetmanor.org](mailto:khartney@sunsetmanor.org)  
616.667.6000

