



Though Americans are living longer and healthier lives, as we age we may encounter physical and cognitive changes that signal a change in our lifestyle is appropriate. In many cases, that means being able to recognize when a parent may no longer be able to take care of themselves without some type of assistance. By looking out for signs of small declines or patterns you will be able to help your parents make changes that will ensure their well-being.

### 1. Taking care of their hygiene, grooming and daily activities

Pay attention to your parents' appearance and daily routines. Are they bathing, brushing their teeth, wearing clean clothes? If they are not looking or smelling clean or wearing clothes that are in need of washing or they fall short of their former grooming standards that may be a sign of depression or cognitive or physical impairment.

### 2. Maintaining their home

Is senior's home well-kept, clean with lights and appliances working and any outdoor space in good condition? If a formerly spotless bathroom or kitchen is much in need of cleaning, dirty dishes are left in the sink, the laundry is piled up or the yard is overgrown that may be a sign that they are no longer able to maintain their home in a comfortable manner without some assistance.

### 3. Safety in their home

Do your parents have difficulty navigating a stairway, maintaining their balance, or have they recently fallen? In addition to any mobility issues, are your parents able to read directions on medication containers, have any difficulty following directions for taking medications? Any risk to your parents' safety should be addressed.

### 4. Appetite and eating patterns

Unexplained weight loss, changes in appetite, spoiled food in the fridge or little nutritious food in the house are signs that something is amiss. When there is no medical reason for weight loss, have your parents lost weight because they are not able to shop for and prepare food as they did previously?

### 5. Safety on the road

Unexplained dents and scratches on your parents' car may be indicators of a loss of dexterity or reaction time, or perhaps declining vision. Are there any other signs of diminished driving skills such as near-misses and recent accidents? If your parents are unwilling to accept alternative types of transportation they are putting themselves and others at great risk.

*After two decades of speaking to household employers on a daily basis, we have compiled this list to help you learn from and avoid these common hiring mistakes.*

The pressures on families faced with determining the best care and safety of an aging family member are extraordinary. Reach out and get advice and guidance where you can. Much like parenting, this is new territory for most of us, and knowledge is power when it comes to these critical decisions related to in-home senior care.

Kathleen Webb

**President**  
**HomeWork Solutions Inc.**



## 6. Activities and participation

Have your parents decreased or stopped participating in an activity that was once important to them such as dining with friends, attending religious services or cultural events, or do they show a reluctance to socialize? If a change in your parents' social relationships has caused concern on the part of their friends and neighbors that may indicate your parent's quality of life is diminishing.

## 7. Concentration and memory

As people age, virtually everyone experiences lapses in memory and attention. But some memory changes are not considered a reflection of normal aging. If a parent is getting lost in familiar surroundings, becoming disoriented about time, people and places, having difficulty remembering important details of recent events, having difficulty following the plot of a television program or book because of memory they are experiencing memory loss that needs to be addressed.

## 8. Physical well being

Are your parents experiencing persistent or uncharacteristic fatigue and/or a lack of energy that is not related to a specific health issue? If your parents have burns or injury marks has that resulted from general physical weakness, forgetfulness or misuse of prescribed drugs or alcohol?

## 9. Financial management

If your parents are leaving mail unopened, including bills, receiving late payment notices, spending money in unusual ways, hiding money or giving money to telemarketers they may no longer be able to handle their finances on their own.

## 10. Behavior and demeanor

Based upon your experience with your parents, are they exhibiting unusual or out-of-character behavior? Examples of uncharacteristic behavior would include our parents being unusually loud or quiet, paranoid, agitated or making phone calls at all hours. Share your concerns with your parents. Your aging parents may not realize they need assistance or they won't admit they need help. Remind your parents that you care about them and want to do what is best for their well-being. Encourage them to have regular medical checkups and follow up with your parents to find out about their doctor visits. Importantly, address safety issues and make a plan to address the problems, including finding out about the types of in-home care that may be appropriate for your parents now or in the near future.

**Free Telephone Consultation Offer! Simply call 800.626.4829 and a representative will be happy to assist you.**

## Other Helpful Resources

- ▶ [Effective Senior Home Care Screening](#)
- ▶ [A guide to privately hiring Senior Home Care](#)
- ▶ [Writing Senior Home Care Work Agreements](#)



© 2013 HomeWork Solutions, Inc.  
Information believed to be true and accurate as of date of publication. HWS assumes no liability for incorrect information. This document is not intended to be specific tax, legal or insurance advice. For information specific to your situation you should consult the appropriate tax, legal or insurance professional of your own choice.