
THE DAILY PRACTICAL · FREE COMPANION TOOL

The First 30 Days after a diagnosis

You will not fix everything this month. You don't have to. This is the short list of what actually matters in the first four weeks — in the order it matters — so you can put the rest down for now. Print it. Check things off. Breathe between them.

01 This week before anything else

- ☐ **Let it be a hard week.** You just got news that changes things. Feeling it is not falling behind.
- ☐ **Start one binder or one folder on your phone.** Every result, name, and phone number goes in the one place from now on.
- ☐ **Tell two or three people the truth.** Not the whole family yet — just the ones who will actually show up.

02 The medical foundation

- ☐ **Get the diagnosis in writing — and the type.** "Dementia" isn't one thing. Alzheimer's, Lewy body, vascular, and frontotemporal are managed differently. Ask which one, and how they know.
- ☐ **Write down every medication, dose, and who prescribed it.** Bring this list to every appointment. It prevents dangerous overlaps.
- ☐ **Book the follow-up before you leave the office.** Ask what the plan is for the next 6–12 months so you're not guessing.
- ☐ **Ask who is quarterbacking their care.** Primary doctor, neurologist, or geriatrician — know who owns the whole picture.

03 The legal & financial groundwork time-sensitive

- ☐ **Make one appointment with an elder-law attorney.** Documents like a power of attorney generally require that your parent still has the capacity to sign. That window can close — this is why it goes early, not later.
 - ☐ **Gather what you already have.** Any existing will, insurance policies, deeds, bank and benefit statements in one place.
 - ☐ **Don't move money or sign anything yet.** Well-meant financial moves can disqualify them from benefits later. Ask first.
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Where Quality of Life Counts

Educational information from Senior Advocators Inc. It is not medical, legal, or financial advice, and it does not create a client relationship. For your family's specific situation, speak with the appropriate licensed professional.

04 Safety at home

- ☐ **Walk the house once, looking for the top three risks.** Usually the stove, the stairs, and the front door. Handle those first; ignore the rest for now.
- ☐ **Order a medical ID bracelet.** Engraved with their name, "memory loss," and your phone number. If they wander or a stranger finds them, it speaks for them when they can't.
- ☐ **Know where your parent keeps the car keys.** Driving is often the first hard conversation. You don't have to have it today — just know where things stand.
- ☐ **Put your number, and a backup, by every phone.** And decide who gets called if they can't reach you.

05 Your support — not optional

- ☐ **Name one person who can cover for two hours.** You need one reliable break in the schedule before you need a plan.
- ☐ **Find one caregiver support group — online counts.** The people already doing this will save you months of learning the hard way.
- ☐ **Protect one thing that is yours.** A walk, a show, a friend. Keeping one thing is how you last the distance.

What this checklist can't do

It can't tell you whether *your* parent is safe home alone right now, how their particular diagnosis is likely to progress, or which decision to make first given your job, your family, and your finances. Those answers depend on details only a conversation can hold.

When you're ready for answers about your situation, not a list

A consultation with Ginell Butler, MAASM, MSA — a gerontologist with 20+ years in aging services — is where the general becomes specific to your mom or dad. **Book at senioradvocators.org.**

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