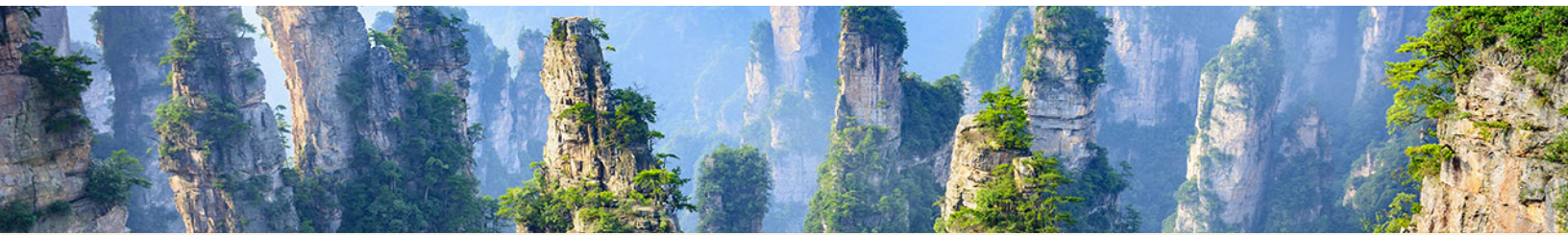


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The Empowered Care Partner



Together With You on Your Ceresti-Care Partner Journey



FEATURED ARTICLE

10 Questions to Help you Connect with Your Loved One

It's not always easy to start a conversation with a loved one, especially if they were never talkative in the first place, or if the two of you don't have much in common. As a care partner, you may be spending all of your time with your loved one, leaving your typical topics of conversation a bit stale.

Sometimes, thinking about your loved one's life, where and when they grew up, and the events and history that occurred during that time can be a good place to start. With that in mind, try sitting down and compiling a list of questions you might ask to help get the conversation started. Try to ensure the questions are meaningful enough to your loved one to light a spark of reminiscence and infuse life into your conversations.

Here are some ideas:

1. What is your happiest memory? This question may cause your loved one to share memories of weddings or babies being born – the day they first set eyes on you may very well be one of those memories. Some happy memories may be bittersweet, some

monumental and some less so. Either way, this is a sweet question that should cause a smile.

- 2. What do you remember about the place you grew up?** Ask your loved one about where they lived as a child and what they remember about it. What were the houses in the neighborhood like and what do they remember about their own home? (If they've been to visit) has it changed since then?
- 3. What did you do for fun growing up?** What did they do in their free time after school and on weekends? Did they have to go to work at a young age or were they lucky enough to be able to do something else? What games did they enjoy and what were some favorite places to go with friends? You might find out some interesting things about your loved one in their heyday.
- 4. What was your first/favorite car?** If your loved one is no longer driving, and especially if this is a sore subject, you may want to skip this question. But if you choose to proceed, this is always a fun one. Cars have certainly changed

FEATURED ARTICLE

Continued from Page 1

over the years. Ask about their own cars, cars that they would have loved to drive, but never did (their dream car). Share your own memories as well.

5. **What was your first job or favorite job?** Jobs have changed over the years, so this question may spark a response that reveals how things have changed over your loved one's lifetime. You can ask them how they found their favorite jobs and how old they were when they started. Did they have a favorite boss or type of work they preferred? People often identify with their jobs so this may be an enjoyable topic for them and an interesting one for you.
6. **Can you offer me any advice for life?** Ask your loved one to offer wisdom about how to be happy, finding and maintaining relationships, finding satisfaction at work, or anything else you'd like them to share. Asking these questions will not only reward you with your loved one's hard-won advice and wisdom, it will show them how much you value their opinion.
7. **If you could return to another time in history, what would that be?** This is a fun one because it can help dig up some good stories from the past. You don't know what you'll get – perhaps they'll talk about happy times they'd love to live over again, or maybe they'd like to visit the future. It's all hypothetical, so there's no wrong answer.
8. **What makes you happy now?** This is an important question to ask as it can color the way you engage with your loved one. If you know what makes them happy, you can implement those things into their daily activities whenever possible. As a care partner, one of your goals is to make sure your loved one is happy and comfortable, so this question can provide you with helpful information to that end.
9. **What makes you most proud?** Occasionally, it's a good idea for anyone to think about their own accomplishments. These could be related to work, personal, or home and family accomplishments. It's also a good opportunity for you to hear about all the things your loved one has accomplished in their lifetime, and will give you a sense of what they value most in life.
10. **What would you like to be your legacy?** This could be a heavy question, but if your loved one seems up to it, it's an important one. Their answer will reveal their core values, what's most important to them. You can help by following up with a suggestion for how to help them craft that legacy. You may help your mother gather and bind copies of her family-favorite recipes so they can be distributed to children and grandchildren. You can help your father write a short memoir. Whatever you do, spend time doing it together. It can be so rewarding for you both and ultimately, you will always have it as a reminder of the time you spent together.

Reminiscence is an important part of engaging with elders and has been shown to improve mood and reduce loneliness and depression. Before you ask questions, think about your loved one's life and whether certain questions would be a good fit.

By Marilyn Abrahamson - Brain-Health Education Specialist at Ceresti Health.

For more information about brain health or caregiver support please visit the **Ceresti Brain Health Education portal** at brainhealth.ceresti.com and enter code **GIVECARE**.

RECOGNIZING CHANGE

Recognizing When Your Loved One Should No Longer Live Alone

As a Ceresti care partner, you strive to keep your loved one safe and happy as they age - even if they're living in their own home independently. When they need more help, it can be hard to know the next step. Should you hire someone to come into their home? Should you explore local assisted living residences?

Being able to recognize the signs your loved one should no longer live alone is important - and knowing what to do about it is crucial. Discussing these issues with them ahead of time is a great first step so your loved one can get the care they need without delay.

No one wants to tell a loved one they can no longer live independently. For that reason, a decision to hire help in the home or explore moving to a new residence is often delayed. This delay can result in a rushed or hasty process with little time for careful decision-making. Worse, it can also come after an injury or medical condition that forces it all to happen sooner.

Recognizing when your loved one needs additional support:

- **You notice changes in cognition:** Is your loved one still able to manage their money, pay their bills and navigate their personal affairs? Or, do they become confused, losing important papers and misplacing personal items more often than usual?
- **You notice changes in their physical health:** If your loved one is having more problems with balance, difficulty walking, more fatigue or dizziness, these could affect their ability to get around safely, and increase their risk for a serious fall. Ask yourself if your loved one is staying on top of their medications and regular doctor visits. All of these are crucial for good health and independence.
- **Changes in eating habits:** Is your loved one getting the right kind of nutrition or do they choose processed foods with high levels of sodium and fat because they're quick and easy to prepare? Has your loved one been maintaining their weight? Weight loss can be a result of a change in eating habits or it can be a sign of a more serious medical condition. Also, observe for signs of dehydration such as dry skin, confusion, or fatigue.
- **Changes in organizational habits:** As people age, it's easier to become overwhelmed by daily responsibilities and chores. Notice if your loved one's home is clean and free of clutter. It's common for seniors to begin to have a harder time making decisions - and that can include deciding whether or not to throw away objects and paper they don't need. If this happens, they begin hoarding, and this

can cause their home to become unsanitary, as well as pose a fall risk because of clutter.

- **Changes in their ability to navigate the home:** Does your loved one's home have stairs inside and/or outside? Over time, this can make navigation within the home, as well as to and from the home more hazardous. Is the neighborhood accessible to their friends and grocery stores? Is the neighborhood safe?
- **Changes in personal hygiene:** Observe your loved one's appearance. Are they having difficulty with grooming, bathing or toileting?
- **Changes in the way they dress:** Does your loved one wear clean, weather-appropriate clothing? Do they look disheveled, with zippers and buttons undone? Sometimes, medical conditions, such as Parkinson's disease or arthritis can make it difficult to manage snaps, buttons and zippers.
- **Changes in mood or state:** When life becomes a struggle, it can result in anxiety or depression. This may be the case, even if your loved one has not shared these feelings with you. If this happens, you may notice changes in your loved one's mood. Also, it's natural for seniors to become more impulsive with age, which can affect judgment, decision-making, and risk-taking. It can also cause them to blurt out words, even if those words are hurtful to others. In some cases, this could be an early sign of dementia.

When you finally sit down for a discussion, it's important to:

- **Always respect your loved one's feelings:** Change is frightening. Talk to your loved one about their concerns and preferences about any options available.
- **Encourage your loved one to plan ahead:** Talk to your loved one about creating an advanced directive or living will. This document will proactively outline any end-of-life wishes they have, including designation of a person to make healthcare decisions if they cannot do it themselves. Also, include your loved one as you explore assisted living and healthcare facilities, as well as options for in-home care.
- **Take it one step at a time:** When you start early, there's no rush, and your loved one will not feel pressured to make any decisions. Take your time to work through all the issues and options together.

If your loved one is showing signs that they should no longer live alone, their primary care doctor may be able to help with this difficult conversation and provide you with the validation needed for a productive discussion. Ideally, begin having this discussion early on, before they have an injury or medical condition that makes a move or a change in situation necessary at that moment.

CERESTI COACH CHRONICLES

MEET KATELYN!



Hello! I am Katelyn Maiden, Training Coordinator at Ceresti Health. I primarily interact with our family care partners beginning their Ceresti Program by walking them through the tablet.

Caring for a loved one became personal to me when I was in college. I graduated from Regis University in Denver, Colorado in 2019 with a B.S. in Healthcare Administration. While I was in college, my own grandmother fell, becoming seriously injured. To help with her recovery, I decided to move in with her and become her care partner. It was a decision that changed my entire perspective on both the sacrifices and the joy that care partners experience. It was a decision that changed my life because it altered the trajectory of my career.

Everyone's care partner journey is unique, and a personalized program like Ceresti would have been so helpful for me. Unfortunately, I hadn't known about Ceresti at that time, and was on my own.

After graduation, I began my career working in the Human Resources Department at a Skilled Nursing Facility training new staff. During the Covid-19 pandemic, our facility closed its doors to the outside world and I became one of the few people our residents could interact with in person on a daily basis. That's when I realized my purpose. I loved bringing families together by facilitating phone calls, video chats & other interactions between residents and their families in any way possible.

Now, my job is to welcome Ceresti family care partners into our program and train them on their tablets. My ultimate goal is to be a part of this team helping Ceresti care partners build their knowledge and skills so they can provide confident, loving, and compassionate care to their loved ones.

I currently live in Wyoming with my husband and our dog. We love hiking and traveling. I am grateful to work at a company where the entire staff genuinely strives to give their all for our care partners, their families and loved ones.