CLEAR
SENIOR LIVING TRANSITIONS

Clarity. Structure. Peace of Mind.

A FAMILY GUIDE FOR THE HOLIDAY SEASON

The Holiday Visit

What to Notice, How to Talk About It, and What to Do in January

A family guide from CLEAR Senior Living Transitions
Mandy Raps, Founder

Notice with love. Start a thoughtful conversation.
Make a plan at your family's pace.

Why the holidays show you what everyday life hides

Most of the year, we check in by phone. "How are you, Mom?" "Oh, I'm fine, honey." And we believe her — because we want to, and because a phone call can't show us the refrigerator, the bathroom grab bars that aren't there, or the stack of unopened mail by the front door.

The holiday visit can. When you walk into the house you grew up in — or the apartment your parents moved to ten years ago — you see it all at once: the way Dad grips the stair rail with both hands, the expired food, the bruise he can't quite explain, the same story told three times before dessert. It can be disorienting. It can also be a gift, because seeing clearly is the first step to helping well.

You are not alone in what you're noticing. January is consistently the busiest month of the year for senior living communities, and it isn't a coincidence. Families spend the holidays seeing what everyday life has been hiding, and then they go home and ask the same question: What do we do now?

That's exactly what this guide is for. It's not a sales pitch and it's not a scare list. It's a way to turn a tender, complicated visit into three manageable things: what to notice, how to talk about it, and what to do in January — calmly, together, and on your family's timeline.

> A note from me. I started Clear Senior Living Transitions after walking this road with my own family. I help my dad care for my mom, who has Alzheimer's, and I've sat at the kitchen table you're sitting at now — loving my parents, worried about them, and honestly not sure where to start. I know the guilt that comes with booking a tour "behind their back." I know the relief that comes when someone who understands just sits down and helps you sort it out. If this guide brings you even a little of that relief, it's done its job.

— Mandy Raps, Founder, Clear Senior Living Transitions

PART 1

The 10-Minute Home Observation Checklist

Here's the reframe that makes this part easier: you are not inspecting your parents. You are noticing, with love, the same things you'd notice if anything in the house you grew up in had changed. Give yourself ten unhurried minutes — while you're putting away groceries, helping in the kitchen, or wandering out to the garage — and let your eyes do what they already want to do.

Use the checkboxes. Don't announce what you're doing. Just see.

The kitchen

- ☐ Expired or spoiled food, or a refrigerator that's nearly empty
- ☐ Signs of scorched pans, stove burners left on, or smoke damage
- ☐ Unwashed dishes or hard-to-reach basics moved to the counter
- ☐ Weight loss that suggests meals are being skipped

The bathroom

- ☐ No grab bars in the tub or shower; loose rugs on tile
- ☐ Medications jumbled together, expired, or clearly not being taken
- ☐ Difficulty getting up from the toilet or in and out of the tub
- ☐ Changes in hygiene — unwashed hair, same clothes day after day

Bedrooms and living areas

- ☐ Laundry piling up; bedding unchanged for a long stretch
- ☐ Clutter on stairs and walkways; burned-out bulbs left dark
- ☐ Space heaters, extension cords, or other quiet hazards
- ☐ Furniture being used as handrails to get across the room

Mail and paperwork

- ☐ Unopened bills, late notices, or charity solicitations stacking up
- ☐ Confusion about money, or new "friends" asking for it
- ☐ Important documents — wills, insurance, deeds — no one can locate

PART 1 · CONTINUED

Notice the everyday details

The house itself

- ☐ Yard, gutters, or repairs visibly falling behind
- ☐ A thermostat set oddly high or low, or rooms closed off entirely
- ☐ Signs of a fall no one mentioned — dents, broken items, rearranged furniture

The car

- ☐ New dents, scrapes, or a side mirror hanging on by hope
- ☐ Expired tags or inspection; confusion about directions to familiar places
- ☐ Near-misses or tickets that got brushed off with a laugh

Mom and Dad themselves

- ☐ Appearance: clean but worn-looking, weight change, bruises that don't add up
- ☐ Mood: withdrawn, irritable, anxious, or unusually flat
- ☐ Mobility: shuffling, unsteadiness, avoiding stairs or outings they used to love
- ☐ Memory: repeated stories, missed appointments, getting lost mid-task

> If you checked more than a couple of boxes, don't panic — and please don't feel guilty for looking. Every box you checked is simply information, and information is what good decisions are made of. Write down what you saw (there's space in the January worksheet at the back) and keep going.

What stood out to me?

PART 2

Starting the conversation

Let me say this plainly: Christmas dinner is not the time. Neither is the ride to church, the middle of a big game, or the moment everyone's saying goodbye at the door. The conversation you're imagining — "we need to talk about the house" dropped into a holiday — lands like an ambush because, timing-wise, it is one.

Here's the better play: notice during the holidays, and talk in January. January is quieter. The tree is down, the house is calm, and a conversation can be a conversation instead of a headline. Use the visit to see, to reconnect, and — if the moment opens naturally — to plant exactly one gentle seed: "I've been thinking about how we can make things easier around here. Can we talk about it after the holidays?"

Three conversation starters that work

> Start with what you noticed, and ask: "Mom, I loved being home. I also noticed the stairs are getting to be a lot. What part of keeping up the house feels hardest these days?" — then listen more than you talk.

> Ask what matters to them: "I want to make sure we're honoring what you want as things change. Can you tell me what matters most to you about where you live?" You're asking about values, not announcing a verdict.

> Plan for the "what if" together: "If something happened — a fall, a hospital stay — what would you want us to do? I'd rather know your wishes now than guess later." Frame it as honoring them, because it is.

PART 2 · CONTINUED

Keep the door open

What not to say

"You can't live here anymore." (Even if you believe it. It's a door slamming, not a door opening.)

"We all agreed that..." before they've had a voice in it. Leading with a family vote makes anyone dig in.

"You're just like Grandma." Comparisons to decline they've witnessed usually carry fear with them.

Anything that starts with "You always" or "You never." You'll spend the whole talk litigating the past instead of planning the future.

How to include siblings

If you have siblings, get aligned before anyone talks to Mom and Dad — not on a decision, but on what each of you actually saw. Compare notes from the checklist. Expect different readouts: the local sibling carries the daily weight, the long-distance sibling often sees the sharpest change, and both perspectives are real. Agree on one point person for the January conversation, split the research and the legwork out loud, and put it in writing in the worksheet. Most sibling fights in this season aren't about the decision — they're about feeling alone in it.

What to do if they shut down

Sometimes you'll get tears, anger, or a flat "I'm fine" and a changed subject. That's not failure — that's a person protecting their independence, which is the very thing you're trying to protect too. Say, "Okay. I love you, and I'm here when you're ready," and let it rest. You've planted the seed. One practical exception: if what you saw is an immediate safety risk — stove left on, driving that endangers others, a fall with injury — you don't have the luxury of waiting, and that's when to bring in their doctor or a professional like me sooner rather than later. Otherwise, January is soon enough, and soon enough said twice with patience beats said once with force.

PART 3

The January Planning Worksheet

Duplicate this page for each parent if needed. Fill it in during January, a little at a time — it isn't a test, and there are no wrong answers. Blank is just where you start.

What I noticed during the holidays

(from the checklist)

What Mom/Dad says they want

Who does what

Name one person per task: research, tours, finances, paperwork, check-ins.

PART 3 · CONTINUED

Turn observations into next steps

Questions for the doctor

Bring this to the next appointment.

Money and legal basics — what exists, and where is it?

Will, power of attorney, healthcare directive, insurance, deeds.

Home safety next steps

Grab bars, lighting, rugs, medication organizer, driving conversation.

When to call in help

The signs that mean “we need support now, not someday.”

My January target date to revisit this page together: _____

You don’t have to figure this out alone

If you've read this far, you're already doing the hardest part: paying attention, with love, before there's a crisis. Everything after this is logistics — and logistics is exactly where a guide helps.

Clear Senior Living Transitions helps adult children across Southeast Texas navigate the move from "we need to do something" to a plan the whole family can live with. We learn your parents' story first, help you understand your options — staying home with support, assisted living, memory care — and walk beside you through tours, paperwork, and the move itself. We're not a placement form or a call center. We're a neighbor who's done this before, including in my own family.

When you're ready, start here: call or text 409.504.2112, visit ClearLivingTransitions.com, or reply to the email that sent you this guide. Ask for Mandy. Tell me what you noticed over the holidays, and we'll make a January plan together — no pressure, no obligation, and no one will ever rush your family.

You've got this. And you don't have to have it alone.

— Mandy Raps, Founder

Clear Senior Living Transitions · Southeast Texas



Illustrative photograph · Pexels. Not a photograph of Mandy’s family.

Talk with Mandy

Call or text 409.504.2112
ClearLivingTransitions.com
No pressure. No obligation. Your family’s timeline.

An educational planning resource, not medical, legal, or financial advice. For immediate danger or a medical emergency, seek emergency assistance.