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Care Partner for Older Adults and their Families

Frequently Asked Questions

First things first: what exactly *is* care management?

In short: geriatric care management looks different for everyone. (Not the most satisfying answer, I know.) But because each person and situation is unique, there's really no one-size-fits-all definition. I start by getting to know folks on a personal level, then together we formulate a plan of engagement that best meets everyone's needs.

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I prefer to think of what I do as offering *partnership* rather than management. As a Certified Care Manager ([NACCM](#)), I partner with older adults and their families to identify needs and find ways to meet those needs. I am a supporter, an advocate, an ally, and – most importantly – a friend.

In addition to Care Management, I also offer Creative Companionship: a unique and specialized form of engagement tailored to those living with dementia or other forms of cognitive impairment.

What can you do as a care partner for me and/or my loved one?

Rather than *telling* you how I can help, I like to start by obtaining a posture of listening. I want to hear from you: what are some of your challenges? What do you think I might help with? To get the ball rolling, here are some general suggestions of what someone in the role of Care Manager/Partner might do:

- Conduct initial and ongoing assessment of needs
- Develop short and long term care plans to address needs
- Make home visits and evaluate living conditions; suggest solutions
- Help manage emotional concerns, stress, and anxieties
- Help explore transitional care when appropriate
- Coordinate care between multiple service providers
- Attend appointments as advocate, administrative assistant, aging-expert
- Discuss important topics like end of life planning
- Navigate available community resources (and make referrals when necessary)
- Educate family and friends on best practices for engagement

... *but* this is not a comprehensive list! This is all about what YOU need. So if there's something you'd like help with that doesn't fit into any of the above categories, no worries; we'll figure it out — that's what I'm here for.

You also offer Creative Companionship — what is that?

Creative Companionship is what I call my personal style of one-on-one engagement: it's a way of intentionally and authentically connecting with older adults — including persons living with cognitive impairment — that makes every individual feel seen, heard, and valued. For those with cognitive impairment, I use creativity and imagination rather than memory as the conversational anchor; when engaging creatively, there are no rules and there is no such thing as a wrong answer! I meet with Creative Companionship clients on a recurring basis and spend time doing something uniquely tailored to them while connecting socially: museum trips, ice cream tastings, nature hikes, anything! *You can learn more about the specific dementia-inclusive methodology in a presentation I recently gave in the Outer Banks: [click here](#).*

Can you give some examples of what clients have asked from you in the past?

One of my clients with mild cognitive impairment has adult children who live out of state. They reached out to me looking for someone local who could assess their mom's situation and make suggestions on how to help her thrive. I did a full assessment then made recommendations/referrals for visiting aides, home care agencies, family education resources, etc. Now I act as the liaison between the agencies and client/family, and am an always-accessible resource to the adult children. In this case, I also provide Creative Companionship: I meet with the client once a week for a personalized time of connection. (We've been to Duke Gardens, done collaborative collage, gone strawberry picking, taken paint classes, even tried chai lattes at as many local cafes as possible...!)

Another client I work with is currently fully independent but hired me as a partner for the aging journey ahead. In other words, she doesn't need a lot from me now, but wanted to establish a relationship and build a strong foundation so I can be her go-to for the next two decades! I am her emergency contact, her healthcare advocate, and her frequent coffee date downtown. We meet once a month to check in and assess the care plan.

The list goes on, with each client having their own unique needs. Whatever the case may be, we collaborate to come up with a creative care plan that works for everyone.

Last question: why do you work with older adults?

I believe every person is a person of worth. No matter how old you are, you are worthy of big love, genuine friendship, and authentic connection. And I don't want to miss the opportunity to learn from and do life with the people around me — people of *all* ages! I am not here to “help” or “serve” older adults in a unidirectional act of caregiving but to be part of something bigger: creating opportunities where we can all experience kinship and belonging. *You read more about my passion for inclusion on my blog: [click here](#).*