

Top Ten Tips for a Successful Tour

The Aging Wisdom logo is a ginkgo biloba leaf, a symbol of strength, hope, and peace. We understand how important it is to come to a place of strength, hope, and peace as you navigate an older loved one's journey with aging.



This journey is often filled with mixed emotions and occasional self-doubt, and it's not unusual to feel guilty and stressed in the process. There are so many choices, and it can quickly become overwhelming. And when it comes to making a move to a senior living community, we meet families eager to sign the dotted line before understanding how to find the best fit. We want to help you cut through the clutter and build confidence as you grow in your understanding of options and how best to support your parents in these important decisions.

Our tour tips guide you in through the process of identifying a senior care community that is the right fit for your loved one at this time. We're here to save you time and money and provide you with the tools to not get hooked in by the "chandelier effect." Our goal is to provide you with information that will help bring you hope, peace, and strength.

Tip 1: Tour communities without your parents. Initially, visit communities alone to eliminate the communities you know your parents will not like. When you take them to tour, show them only the ones you know they are likely to enjoy. Narrow your choices to your top 2-3. Doing the initial legwork on your own will pay off in the long run.

Tip 2: Tour at mealtime. Observing who lives in the community will help you determine if there might be kindred spirits. The residents will be your parents' new neighbors and friends. Are your parents fairly active and able to engage in conversations? Do other residents share this level of activity? Does your parent use a wheelchair or walker? Might they need assistance dining? Make sure the other residents have similar needs so your loved one fits into the community culture. Communities will often allow you to join a meal, which is a great chance to check out their food.

Tip 3: Take pictures & notes. Just like buying a new house, once you leave, you will soon forget details and the communities will begin to blend together. Pictures will help you differentiate them, especially if it might be a several-months process to get your parents moved.

Tip 4: Start conversations. Ask residents and families you meet along the tour how they like it there as well as one thing they would change if they could. When I have been on tours, often in an elevator, I might say, "Hi, I'm Lisa. I am touring for my aunt. How did you like living here? Is there anything you would change?"

Tip 5: Observe the caregivers. They will be the ones providing the most crucial support to your parents. Do they appear kind? Attentive? How are the residents responding to their assistance? How do they interact with each other? Are they sitting in a corner on their cell phones or are they smiling and engaged in the life of the community?

Tip 6: Get the full tour. See all areas of the community, even if you aren't in the market for assisted living, memory care or skilled nursing. It is very likely that your parent will eventually need a higher level of care, and you want to see what those areas look like before they do.

Tip 7: Team Longevity. Ask how long the ED and head nurse have been there; try to meet both. These are two key players in the community and having a sense of their personalities and professionalism is key.

Tip 8: Clarity on costs. Make sure you understand the costs, especially care costs. It can be helpful to ask: What will the care cost when my mom needs the most assistance? What is the most one of your residents is currently paying? What is the average amount paid for care?

Tip 9: Inquire if residents are ever asked to move out. If so, under what circumstances? Knowing this is important. Many communities will say that they can provide care until your parent passes away. This might be true for some residents but there may come a time when care needs increase beyond the capacities of that community. You want to know ahead of time what those trigger points might be. We admire communities that are honest about what they can and can't do. Some of our favorite communities are ones that are very clear about their boundaries. Just because your parent might need to move one day, doesn't mean that you shouldn't consider that community if it is the best fit for them right now.

Tip 10: Trust your gut. After your tour, quickly jot down your initial impressions for reference. Trust your gut. How does the community make you feel? We like communities that feel warm, inviting, and have lots of energy. Our favorite communities have a vibrant main area. Are there visitors around? You should feel welcome and at home because you will want your parent in a community that you also enjoy spending time in.

Touring these communities can be daunting

An internet search delivers a dizzying array of choices. They all put their best foot forward. But architectural features and social amenities — the “chandelier effect” — are only superficial measures of quality.



An [Aging Life Care Manager](#) often has had other clients who live in these facilities. They have a firm grasp on deeper metrics, such as the tone of the administrative leadership, the training and stability of the staff, the solvency of the company, and the overall personality of the community.

Our [Aging Life Care Managers](#) also know current conditions in the market that can save you money. For instance, if a community happens to have a lot of openings, a lower monthly rate or entry fee could be negotiated.

Looking for unbiased recommendations based on all your options?

[Click here to Schedule a Get-Acquainted Call](#) to determine if our services fit your needs.