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Guest column

Look for the signs loved ones need aid

By Alex Wray

It is sometimes difficult to know when our aging parents, spouses or loved ones need help. We cherish our independence and may not want to ask for assistance even when we need it. Here are some warning signs that should alert you that a loved one or friend may have a problem. Being aware of these signs and seeking assistance before a crisis occurs is the best way to empower our loved ones, and give them the help they need to continue to lead a safe, happy life at home.

Phone calls. He or she makes frequent phone calls about the same thing but can't remember

calling. You have received concerned calls from neighbors or friends about your loved one.

Physical condition. You notice that he or she is not taking medications as prescribed. He or she appears to be having difficulties with activities of daily living — clothing and hair look dirty. Bills and paper work are accumulating, and trash is piling up in the house.

He or she has difficulty seeing or hearing well enough to communicate.

You notice your loved one has become fragile, and is unsteady on his or her feet.

He or she has gained or lost a significant amount of weight or is

skipping meals.

Mental condition. He or she has become confused or forgetful; has gotten lost; is refusing to leave the house, even for doctor or other regularly scheduled appointments; or has become suspicious of others, including trusted family or friends.

If you notice one or more of these signs, the first step is to encourage your loved one to see his or her doctor. The doctor will evaluate the problem and may recommend further assessment by a geriatric or other specialist.

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