



## Life at the Cottage

Highgate's approach to memory care

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## Introduction

“I’m worried my mom will feel abandoned.” “What if my dad is just going to be sitting in his room in front of the TV all day?” “My mom has dementia and my dad doesn’t, and I don’t want to split them up.”

If you’re like most people, these are probably only a few of the reasons why you’re hesitant to consider memory care for a loved one — and they’re valid reasons. Not all memory care communities are created equal. But there are a lot of reasons why [memory care at Highgate Senior Living<sup>1</sup>](https://www.highgateseniorliving.com/living-options/memory-care) is different than what you expect.

“People who have seen other memory care communities are concerned that their loved one won’t be well-attended to and well-cared for. They’re worried about the basics: Are they eating? Are they clean? Are they well-fed? Are they safe? Are they well-stimulated?” says Karla Webster, Memory Care

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.highgateseniorliving.com/living-options/memory-care>



Coordinator at [Highgate at Temecula](https://www.highgateseniorliving.com/communities/temecula).<sup>2</sup>

“After they’ve been in Highgate, many family members find that their loved one is not only much more engaged, but they’re actually thriving.”

Once that caregiving role is shifted to Highgate, you are able to simply enjoy the relationship with your loved one again.

“We’ve seen family caregivers experience peace of mind once their loved one starts receiving memory care at Highgate at Temecula,” says LaTresh Walker, Healthcare Director of Highgate at Temecula. “They are able to be the child or spouse again and rest easy knowing that their loved one is getting the best care possible.”



**In this guide, you'll learn about:**

- What it feels like to walk into the Cottage memory care community and how it's been specifically designed for residents with memory loss
- Highgate's positive approach to memory care and the training provided for care partners
- How memory care can help your loved one live a meaningful and fulfilling life
- How shifting the caregiving responsibilities to Highgate allows you to simply enjoy the relationship with your loved one again

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.highgateseniorliving.com/communities/temecula>



## Chapter 1: A Day at the Cottage

Highgate Senior Living offers memory care options in a variety of desirable communities throughout Arizona, California, Montana, and Washington. Within each senior living facility, the memory care community is called the Cottage.

When you first walk into the Cottage, you might see residents in the dining room or the living room. Sometimes they're doing an activity. Maybe they're at a meal. What you see will be different depending on which community you're in, but one thing will always be true: "The care partners will be interacting with the residents and providing what they need in that moment," says Lena Zaeske, memory care coordinator at Highgate at Bozeman.

As you continue walking the halls, you'll notice that the building is constructed with elements specifically designed for people with memory loss.

## Designing for Memory Care

In a white paper co-published by design firm Perkins Eastman and the Alzheimer's Foundation of America, titled "[Excellence in Design: Optimal Living Space for People with Alzheimer's Disease and Related Dementias](https://www.colleaga.org/sites/default/files/attachments/ExcellenceinDesign_Report.pdf),"<sup>3</sup> the authors outline four key guidelines for the design of memory care communities that facilitate high-quality, person-centered care.

1. Minimize overstimulation
2. Introduce the familiar
3. Provide easy and supportive wayfinding and orientation
4. Accommodate both residents and their families

You'll notice these concepts implemented through the Cottages at Highgate communities.

## Wayfinding and Orientation

For example, at Highgate at Bozeman, the Cottage features a layout that allows residents to wander without getting lost. "It has a layout where you can walk the room's border," Zaeske says. "You can walk in a complete circle, and you don't have to worry about getting lost because if you keep walking, you'll eventually make it back to the common area. It's great for our busier residents who like to walk or get into things and want that interaction going on around them."

Another key element of many Cottage communities is an easily accessible garden with a simple circular path, which gives someone with dementia a secure place to go outside and lessens the feeling of being cooped up.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.colleaga.org/sites/default/files/attachments/ExcellenceinDesign\\_Report.pdf](https://www.colleaga.org/sites/default/files/attachments/ExcellenceinDesign_Report.pdf)

## Entry and Egress

Many people with dementia feel the need to wander or think they are supposed to be somewhere, which can lead to agitation or elopement attempts. When designing Highgate's memory care communities, entry or exit points were de-emphasized.

"When you're coming out of the Cottage at Highgate at Bozeman, we have a back hallway that's been designed to look like a library," Zaeske says. "It helps with exit-seeking because residents don't feel the need to be trying to get out that door."

## Quiet Spaces

Highgate at Bozeman is the only Highgate location that also currently offers the Chalet, a memory care community for residents who can get overstimulated easily. It's a little quieter and more serene than the Cottage. By offering two distinct memory care communities, Highgate at Bozeman care partners have the opportunity to place a resident either in the Cottage or the Chalet based on their personality or need.

"We have a few residents who live in the Chalet who have very poor vision but their hearing is great," Zaeske says. "You can understand how the Cottage might be overwhelming to them. One of them lived in the Cottage for a week until we had a room available in the Chalet. She's done so much better in the Chalet. The Cottage was just too much. In the Chalet, she participates and she sits in the common area, but it's at the right level for her."

## Support for Family Involvement

All Highgate communities encourage visitors anytime and invite family and friends to join their loved ones for frequent family events.



Highgate at Prescott<sup>4</sup> hosts reminiscing events where friends and family members can come share life experiences, memories, and stories from the past with their loved one. This type of activity not only brings up happy memories and good feelings but can also give people with dementia a sense of competence and confidence through using a skill they still have.



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4 <https://www.highgateseniorliving.com/communities/prescott>





## Chapter 2: A Positive Approach to Memory Care

The Highgate mission is to help every resident, regardless of age or ailment, live a life of purpose. You might be wondering how care partners do this in memory care when they are dealing with changes in brain function.

Memory care partners at Highgate Senior Living are trained in [Positive Approach to Care](#)<sup>5</sup> (PAC), developed by [Teepa Snow](#),<sup>6</sup> in which care partners focus not on what's lost but on what's left and concentrate on what can be done rather than what can't.

“We do things *with* your loved ones instead of *for* your loved ones,” says Mandy Ketcham, Community Relations Coordinator at [Highgate at Yakima](#).<sup>7</sup> “For example, if they need help eating, we will help eat with them instead of just feeding them. There’s a big difference doing something with them rather than for them.”

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5 <https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/what-makes-highgates-positive-approach-to-memory-care-unique>

6 <https://teepasnow.com/>

7 <https://www.highgateseniorliving.com/communities/temecula>

It takes energy, devotion, and love to care for those with memory loss. It takes the kind of people who work at Highgate.

## Treating Everyone Like Family

When touring other memory care communities, you might have heard about how they handle “problem behaviors” or “behavioral issues” with frequent, heavy sedation or by removing them from the situation. Not at Highgate Senior Living.

Whether it’s nighttime wandering, confusion, repetitive questions, incontinence, or just wanting “to go home,” the highly trained care partners have the expertise to handle these concerns.

But it’s not just training. From the very beginning, Highgate hires people who are the right fit — care partners with the desire to contribute to enriching the lives of our residents — and then offers PAC training.

The Positive Approach to Care model trains care partners to respond to a person’s change in cognition and abilities in a way that is respectful, not harmful or offensive. No matter how challenging the situation, it’s not a “problem”.

In addition to PAC training, Highgate offers [Virtual Dementia Tours](#).<sup>8</sup> During a Virtual Dementia Tour (VDT), trained facilitators guide participants outfitted with patented devices that alter their senses while they try to complete common everyday tasks and exercises.

“The saying ‘Don’t judge me until you’ve walked a mile in my shoes’ is exactly what a virtual dementia tour is,” says Katrina Custodio, the Life Enhancement Coordinator at [Highgate at Temecula](#).<sup>9</sup> “After participating in a VDT, our care

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8 <https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/virtual-dementia-helps-temecula-team-improve-the-lives-with-dementia>

9 <https://www.highgateseniorliving.com/communities/temecula>

partners have experienced firsthand what it is like to live with dementia. By knowing what dementia feels like, we can better approach our care for our residents.”

## Thinking About Responses Instead of Reactions

Through PAC and VDT training, Highgate memory care partners come to understand that common reactions to the person with dementia can become thoughtful responses that improve quality of life for everyone involved. They recognize that the person with dementia is doing the best they can, and if something isn’t working, it’s their responsibility to change their approach toward the person living with dementia as well as to discover what can be done differently to address the challenging situation.

For example, some people with dementia experience a common symptom known as [sundowning](#).<sup>10</sup> They may get confused, sad, restless, anxious, fearful, angry, paranoid, or agitated, and they may express these emotions through pacing, yelling, crying, hallucinating, lashing out, or wandering off.



Ketcham recalls one resident who would get upset and physical toward people around her. “But if you saw her start to get that way, you could get her headphones and iPad, which her daughter had preloaded with her favorite music. All you had to do was get them on her ears, and she would become a different person. She would sing, and eventually, she’d be dancing down the hall instead of pushing another resident.”

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## Advocating for a Holistic Health Care Approach

You might have read news reports recently of nursing homes sedating residents with dementia by misusing antipsychotic drugs. Highgate Senior Living takes the exact opposite approach.

“With every pill, there is a side effect,” says Amelia Adkins, Senior Director of Marketing for Highgate Senior Living. “We have high expectations for a low amount of medicine in our communities.”

In the memory care communities at Highgate, the care partners take a [holistic approach to care](#),<sup>11</sup> using things like tea, aromatherapy, and spa baths and massages to relax and soothe.

At the end of the day, if someone is agitated, Highgate care partners don’t have a knee-jerk reaction and say a resident needs more pills. Instead, they might use lavender aromatherapy, which is very calming.

Holistic also means offering alternative ways to boost memory and health, through exercise, proper eating and hydration, and finding ways each day to keep residents fully engaged in life.

For example, many times people will tell Ketcham that their family member gets agitated in the afternoon. At Highgate, care partners try to find out what’s actually going on and address the root cause of that frustration. Maybe it’s actually a lack of activity or movement. Maybe they have pent-up energy and they’re bored. Are they up all night pacing at home? Well, maybe it’s because they’ve been sitting around all day. So Highgate offers an environment where they can be engaged.

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<sup>11</sup> <https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/a-behind-the-scenes-look-at-highgates-holistic-care-philosophy>



## Chapter 3: A Meaningful and Fulfilling Life

One fear families have about memory care is that their loved one's days will all start to look the same. But when it comes to dementia care, staying active and engaged is critical, Custodio says.

Highgate's memory care communities offer a variety of programs that engage residents mentally, socially, emotionally, and spiritually.<sup>12</sup> One day, your loved one might enjoy Afternoon Tea served London-style with fellow residents, and the next, you and your siblings could join them in the pub for Happy Hour.

“Some activities that have worked really well are those activities centered around music and art, such as sing-alongs to their favorite artists or era, dancing and creating things whether it be a painting or sculpting something from clay, or even gardening,” she says. “Activities that work the mind, body, and soul.”

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<sup>12</sup> <https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/highgate-helps-memory-care-have-a-positive-experience>

## Enhancing Life Through Activities

Highgate provides exercise classes, music therapy, and relaxing massages and offers a variety of activities and outings for fun. The Life Enhancement Program at Highgate Senior Living includes:

- Physical activities, such as walking, yoga, conductorcise, bands and weights, and exercise games
- Intellectual stimulation through current event discussions, puzzles, technology classes, guest speakers, and cultural field trips
- Socialization through large and small group get-togethers, musical guests and sing-alongs, gardening activities, special interest clubs, community interactive events, and special celebrations
- Philanthropic ventures, where residents use their special skills and talents to share with others, [contributing to the community and their own sense of purpose](#)<sup>13</sup>
- Spiritual wellness through multi-faith worship opportunities and Bible study

“Staying active and engaged is important for someone with dementia,” Custodio says. “It’s about the quality of life. When someone has a purpose, it gives the individual the sense of self-worth.”

## Living Each Day to the Fullest

To ensure residents are living each day to the fullest, Highgate care partners go above and beyond everyday care.

For example, for residents who were homemakers, care partners might pull out some towels and start folding them. Then, the residents will come over and fold with them. That might seem small, but it used to provide them purpose to do the laundry, so Highgate finds those things and helps them with that.

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<sup>13</sup> <https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/3-purposeful-living-projects>





## Chapter 4: A Peace of Mind

Caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's or dementia can be difficult, exhausting, and emotionally draining. Once that caregiving role is shifted to Highgate, a resident's spouse and/or family members are free to simply enjoy the relationship again.

Webster says she has seen many family caregivers experience peace of mind once their loved one starts receiving memory care at Highgate.

In some cases, "the family caregiver has difficulties because their loved one with dementia views them as the enemy because they don't understand they need help," Webster says. "Once we introduce our care partners to the person with dementia, they start to see their loved ones as family again. That is when I see peace for both resident and family member."

### Keeping Couples Together

If one of your parents has Alzheimer's or another form of dementia and the

other doesn't, there are a lot of memory care facilities that can't — or won't — accommodate them. But [keeping couples together](https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/couples-care-a-q-and-a-with-senior-sweethearts-who-call-high-gate-home)<sup>14</sup> as long as possible is something Highgate prides itself on.

Zaeske recalls one man who was caring for his wife, who has dementia, at home. He used to get frustrated, and eventually, he burned out providing full-time care at home. Now, they both live at Highgate at Bozeman — he in the Manor, the assisted living community, and she in the Cottage, the memory care community.

“He'll come spend a couple hours with her every day,” she says. “He brings her cookies or a snack. He looks better and healthier because he's no longer trying to provide all the care. And when he comes over, instead of being frustrated, he just gets to sit with her and enjoy that time with her.”

## Closing

Ultimately, memory care at Highgate Senior Living is a place where, no matter what their health issues, residents can maintain the highest level of independence possible. Having choices is empowering. When people can make their own decisions, rather than have them made for them, they are stronger and happier.

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14 <https://blog.highgateseniorliving.com/couples-care-a-q-and-a-with-senior-sweethearts-who-call-high-gate-home>



*This guide is brought to you by Highgate Senior Living, an industry-leading assisted living and memory care provider offering a holistic approach to care. Pioneering change in the senior living industry, Highgate is committed to creating a unique and desirable living option where each resident can live a life of purpose.*

Visit our website at [www.highgateseniorliving.com](http://www.highgateseniorliving.com) to learn more.

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