A PORCHLIGHT FAMILY GUIDE

GUIDE + 7-DAY WORKBOOK

Leave the light on.

How to check in on an aging parent, without it feeling like checking up.

PORCHLIGHT

Seven short chapters
One printable plan

BEFORE YOU BEGIN

If you're reading this, *you already care a lot.*

Maybe Mom lives alone now. Maybe Dad came home from the hospital last month. Maybe you just have a feeling that the phone calls have been shorter lately, and you can't tell if that means anything.

This guide is for that feeling. It won't lecture you or scare you. It will help you notice what matters, talk about it kindly, share the work with your family, and build a daily rhythm that keeps everyone close.

Read it in one sitting or one chapter a night. Then use the 7-day workbook to turn it into a plan.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

- **Chapters 1–7** take about 5 minutes each.
- **The workbook** gives you one small task a day for a week.
- **The printables** are made to live on the fridge.

CONTENTS

01 **The quiet in between** 3
Why the small, daily moments matter

02 **Five signs it's time for a daily check-in** 5
What to look for, and what helps

03 **Bring it up kindly** 7
Scripts that sound like love, not worry

04 **What a good check-in sounds like** 9
The five S's and a question bank

05 **Share the load** 11
Turn siblings into a team

06 **When something changes** 13
What to do, and how fast

07 **A routine that lasts** 15
Honest look at your options

– **Meet Porchlight** 17
A daily check-in for the days you can't call

– **Your 7-day workbook** 19
One small step a day

– **Printables** 23
Family plan and check-in log

This guide shares general information to help families stay connected. It is not medical advice. If you are worried about someone's health, talk with their doctor. In an emergency, call 911.

CHAPTER 01

The quiet *in between.*

Most changes in an aging parent don't arrive as a crisis. They arrive quietly, in the space between phone calls, and they're easy to miss when everyone is busy.

IN THIS CHAPTER

01 Why "I'm fine" doesn't tell the whole story

02 Rhythm: the signal hiding in plain sight

03 Why connection is part of health

50%

Higher risk of dementia for older adults with poor social connection, according to the U.S. Surgeon General's 2023 advisory on loneliness and isolation.

Source: U.S. Surgeon General, Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation, 2023

The “I’m fine” problem

Ask almost any parent how they are and you’ll hear the same two words. They don’t want to worry you. They may not notice the change themselves. And a weekly call is a snapshot; it can’t show you a trend.

What tells the real story is **rhythm**: when they wake, whether they’ve eaten, how quickly they answer, whether they remember today’s plans. When the rhythm shifts for a few days, that shift is the signal, long before anyone would call it a problem.

Connection is part of health

Feeling connected isn’t a nice extra. The Surgeon General’s advisory links poor social connection to a 29% higher risk of heart disease and a 32% higher risk of stroke. A friendly voice every day is good for them, not only for your peace of mind.

And you are not alone

About 63 million Americans are family caregivers, and six in ten of them also hold a job. If you feel stretched, it’s because you are. The goal of this guide is a routine that is lighter for you and warmer for them.

63M

Americans are family caregivers, up 45% in a decade.

AARP & National Alliance for Caregiving, Caregiving in the US 2025

1 in 4

Nearly one in four caregivers say they feel socially isolated themselves.

Caregiving in the US 2025

TRY THIS TONIGHT

Write down three things that make a “normal” day sound normal for your parent. Their wake-up time, a favorite show, the neighbor they chat with. That’s your first baseline.

CHAPTER 02

Five signs it's time *for a daily check-in.*

You don't need a crisis to start. These are common moments when a daily hello makes a real difference.

IN THIS CHAPTER

01 Five common moments to start

02 A quick self-check

03 What to do if you checked two or more

1 in 4

Adults 65 and older report a fall each year, and less than half tell their doctor.

Source: CDC, Older Adult Falls Data

1

They live alone, and days can pass without anyone hearing their voice.

Independence matters, and it's worth protecting. A short daily call keeps it, while making sure no day goes completely unchecked.

2

There's been a fall, a hospital stay or a procedure.

The weeks after coming home are when families worry most. Falling once doubles the chance of falling again, so a gentle daily check makes sense here.

3

Their rhythm is shifting.

Mail piling up, calls going unanswered, meals skipped, sleeping later, sounding more tired than usual. One day means little. Several in a row are worth a conversation.

4

Memory or medicine is slipping.

Missing an appointment, repeating a story within the same call, or being unsure whether the morning pills were taken. Write down what you notice and when, and share it with their doctor.

5

The family is stretched thin.

Siblings unsure who called last. You checking your phone in meetings. Guilt on the days you don't call. That strain is a sign too, and it's fixable.

If you checked two or more, a daily check-in is worth trying. Chapter 3 shows how to bring it up so it feels like care, not surveillance.



WHERE PORCHLIGHT HELPS

Porchlight calls at the same time each day on the phone they already have, and texts the family a short summary. If two calls go unanswered, you get a missed-check-in alert.

CHAPTER 03

Bring it up *kindly.*

How you start the conversation decides how it goes. Lead with connection, give them control, and make it about your peace of mind rather than their decline.

IN THIS CHAPTER

01 Four rules that keep it respectful

02 Word-for-word scripts you can borrow

03 What to do if the answer is no

INSTEAD OF

"We're worried you can't manage on your own."

TRY

"I'd sleep better knowing someone says good morning to you every day."

Four rules that work

1. **Make it about you.**
   "I worry when I can't reach you" is easier to hear than "You need help."

2. **Ask, don't announce.**
   Offer a choice of time, phone and voice. People accept what they help choose.

3. **Start small and call it a trial.**
   "Let's try it for a month" is low pressure. If they don't like it, it stops.

4. **Protect their dignity.**
   Never discuss it in front of others or in the middle of a bad day. Pick a calm, ordinary moment.

AVOID

- "For your own good" and "at your age"
- Springing it on them at a holiday
- Setting it up without telling them

Words you can borrow

TO OPEN

> *"I love our Sunday calls. I've been wishing I could hear how you are on the other days too."*

IF THEY SAY "I DON'T NEED CHECKING ON"

> *"I know you don't. This is for me. Can we try it for a month and see?"*

IF THEY WORRY IT'S COMPLICATED

> *"Nothing to learn. Your phone rings, you chat for a few minutes, that's it."*

IF THE ANSWER IS STILL NO

Thank them, and drop it for a few weeks. Ask what *would* make them comfortable. A "no" today is often a "maybe" after a calm second conversation.

WHERE PORCHLIGHT HELPS

Your parent always stays in control: they can say "not today" and the call ends politely, or ask for the calls to stop altogether. Porchlight introduces itself as an automated check-in at the start of every call and never pretends to be a person.

CHAPTER 04

What a good check-in *sounds like.*

A good check-in feels like a chat, not a quiz. Five short topics cover almost everything that matters, and over time they show you what “normal” sounds like.

IN THIS CHAPTER

01 The five S’s: a simple check-in framework

02 How to listen for change

03 A question bank for quiet days

- Sleep
- Sustenance
- Spirits
- Schedule
- Steadiness

The five S's

TOPIC	ASK IT LIKE THIS	WORTH NOTING IF…
Sleep	*"How did you sleep last night?"*	Up more than usual, or sleeping much later
Sustenance	*"What did you have for breakfast?"*	Skipped meals, "just tea" several days running
Spirits	*"What's been the best part of your week?"*	Flat, quieter or more worried than their normal
Schedule	*"What's on for today?"*	Unsure of plans or appointments they usually know
Steadiness	*"Any dizzy spells or wobbles this week?"*	Any mention of a fall, a near-fall or feeling unsteady

Listen for the how, not just the what

Their pace, their energy and how clearly they follow the conversation tell you as much as their answers. Compare each call to their own normal, not to anyone else's.

Keep it warm

- Let them wander. Ten minutes on the garden is a good sign.
- End with something to look forward to.

QUESTION BANK FOR DAYS YOU'RE STUCK

- Who have you talked to this week?
- What are you reading or watching?
- Is there anything you need from the store?
- What should I tell the grandkids from you?
- Is anything on your mind today?

WHERE PORCHLIGHT HELPS

Every Porchlight call covers sleep, meals, mood and plans in a relaxed two-to-five-minute conversation, then notes energy, clarity and memory compared with your parent's own recent calls.

CHAPTER 05

Share *the load.*

Most families don't lack love. They lack a shared picture. When everyone sees the same morning, guilt and guesswork turn into a team.

IN THIS CHAPTER

01 Five family roles, and how to share them

02 Three things every family should agree on

03 How to end "who called Mom last?"



"My brother and I both see the same dashboard, so we stopped playing telephone about who called Mom last."

Mei Tanaka, daughter · Sunnyvale, CA · Porchlight family

Give everyone a role

Roles stop the same person doing everything. Match them to distance and strengths, not to who feels most guilty.

- **The Caller**
  Keeps the daily or weekly voice contact going.
- **The Fixer**
  Prescriptions, groceries, the leaky tap.
- **The Visitor**
  Lives closest and drops by on a set day.
- **The Organizer**
  Appointments, bills and the paperwork.
- **The Backup**
  Steps in when someone is traveling or sick.

Agree on three things

One place for updates

A group text, a shared note, or a shared dashboard. Not five private conversations.

How each person hears news

Some want every update; some only want to hear if something changes. Both are fine. Write it down.

Who responds, and how fast

Decide now who calls Mom if something seems off, and who is next if they can't.

6 in 10

Family caregivers also hold a paid job.

Caregiving in the US 2025

WHERE PORCHLIGHT HELPS

With the Family Circle plan, up to five family members see the same summary, share a task list ("who's picking up the prescription?") and keep a care log of calls, visits and notes.

CHAPTER 06

When something *changes.*

Noticing is only half of it. Knowing what to do next, and how quickly, is what keeps a small change from becoming a big one.

IN THIS CHAPTER

01 Four levels, from all-is-well to emergency

02 A what-to-do table for common changes

03 Stroke signs, crisis lines and keeping a log

All seems well
No action needed. Enjoy your day.

Worth checking in
A friendly call or text today is sensible.

Please check today
A person should follow up soon.

Emergency
Call 911. Don't wait for anyone else.

What you notice, and what to do

IF YOU NOTICE…	A SENSIBLE NEXT STEP
More tired or quieter than usual for a day	Call back later, or ask a sibling to. Note it in your log.
The same change three days running	Call them today. Consider letting their doctor's office know what you've noticed.
Unsure about medicines or appointments	Help set up a pill organizer or reminder. Mention it at the next visit.
Any mention of a fall or a bump to the head	Ask how they are and whether they hit their head. CDC advises seeing a doctor right away after a fall with a head strike.
No answer at the usual time	Try again, then call your backup person or a neighbor with a key.
Sudden confusion, chest pain, trouble breathing	Call 911.

KNOW THE SIGNS OF STROKE: BE FAST

- **B** Balance: sudden loss of balance
- **E** Eyes: sudden trouble seeing
- **F** Face: one side droops
- **A** Arms: one arm weak or drifting
- **S** Speech: slurred or strange
- **T** Time: call 911 right away

KEEP A SIMPLE LOG

Date, what you noticed, what you did. Doctors find a written timeline far more useful than "she's been off lately." Use the log on page 24.

IF THEY SEEM LOW OR HOPELESS

Call or text **988**, the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, any time, day or night.

This table is general guidance for families, not medical advice. When in doubt, call their doctor, or 911 in an emergency.

CHAPTER 07

A routine *that lasts.*

The best plan is the one your family can keep up in a busy month, not just a calm one. Here's an honest look at the options, including ours.

IN THIS CHAPTER

01 Four options, compared honestly

02 Why most families combine two

03 How to write it down so it sticks

THE IDEA IN ONE LINE

Your calls are for love and catching up. A daily check-in is the safety net in between.

Your options, side by side

OPTION	WHAT IT'S GOOD AT	WHERE IT FALLS SHORT
Family call rota	Free and personal. Nothing beats your voice.	Hard to keep daily for months. Gaps appear in busy weeks, and updates live in different heads.
Medical alert button	Fast help in an emergency, if it's worn and pressed.	Only works in the moment. It won't tell you about a slow change in sleep, mood or memory.
Cameras and sensors	Lots of data about movement in the home.	Can feel like being watched. Needs Wi-Fi, set-up and charging. Data isn't conversation.
Daily check-in call (like Porchlight)	A real conversation every day on their own phone, with a plain-language summary for the family.	It's an automated service, not a person or an emergency response service. Plans start at $39 a month.

Most families combine two

A daily check-in for consistency, plus your own calls for closeness. Add an alert button if falls are a real worry. Some families even find they call *more*, not less, once the daily worry is handled.



"I actually call Mom more now... Now I call because I know when she really needs me, and I relax when she doesn't."

Karen Doyle, daughter · Boise, ID

Whatever you choose, write it down. The family plan on page 23 takes ten minutes and saves a lot of "I thought you were calling her."

MEET PORCHLIGHT

You can't always be there. *Porchlight can.*

A warm daily call for Mom or Dad, and a plain-language update for everyone who loves them. Everything in this guide, done every day, without anyone having to remember.

9:00 AM

The phone rings

At the time you choose, on the landline or mobile they already use. No app, no login, no device to charge.

2–5 MIN

A real conversation

A warm, unhurried voice asks how they slept, whether they've eaten, how they're feeling, and listens.

MINUTES LATER

You get the summary

A short text or email in plain language. If something sounds off, or nobody answers twice, you're told right away.

PORCHLIGHT 9:14 AM

All seems well · Connie

Sounded bright, slept well, and was looking forward to Margaret's visit at eleven.

Energy: usual | Clarity: warm | Memory: on track

CHOOSE WHO CALLS



Six companion voices, from warm and unhurried to bilingual English and Spanish. Speaks slowly, waits for answers, never talks over anyone.

- Works on any phone
- Month to month
- Cancel any time
- We never sell your data

PLANS

Choose what you need to know.

No contracts, no equipment. Prices are per person receiving calls; one plan covers two parents in the same home.

Check-In

Know how today went.

$39/mo

- Daily conversation
- Daily family summary
- Missed-call alert
- Basic reminders

Most popular

Family Circle

Know together.

$69/mo

- Everything in Check-In
- Up to 5 family members
- Trend insights
- Care log and shared tasks
- Escalation alerts and weekly recap

Peace of Mind+

Stay closer during a period of concern.

$99/mo

- Everything in Family Circle
- On-demand additional calls
- Personalized concern tracking
- Enhanced alerting
- Personalized weekly review

Coming home from the hospital?

Recovery Mode adds gentle recovery questions for the weeks after a stay or procedure, then switches off on its own.

Careful about what it is, and isn't

Not a medical device, diagnosis or emergency service, and it gives no medical advice. In an emergency, call 911.

Start a daily check-in

Set up in minutes at **porchlightcalls.com**. Try it for a month; cancel any time.

Get started →

YOUR 7-DAY WORKBOOK

One small step *a day.*

Seven short tasks, about ten minutes each. By the end of the week you'll have a plan your whole family understands.

DAY 1

Notice what normal sounds like

You can only spot a change if you know the baseline.

USUALLY WAKES UP AROUND

USUAL BREAKFAST

PEOPLE THEY TALK TO MOST

THINGS THEY LOOK FORWARD TO EACH WEEK

HOW THEY SOUND ON A GOOD DAY

DAY 2

Have the first conversation

Use a script from Chapter 3. Keep it short and warm.

- [ ] I chose a calm, ordinary moment
- [ ] I made it about my peace of mind
- [ ] I offered a choice of time and phone
- [ ] I suggested trying it for a month

WHAT THEY SAID

DAY 3

Choose the daily moment

Same time, same phone, every day. Rhythm is what makes changes visible.

BEST TIME OF DAY

PHONE TO CALL (LANDLINE OR MOBILE)

TIMES TO AVOID (SHOWS, NAPS, VISITS)

WHO CALLS, OR WHICH VOICE THEY'D LIKE

DAY 4

Build the circle

List everyone who should hear how today went, and how they want to hear it.

NAME	ROLE	UPDATES BY	EVERY DAY / ONLY CHANGES

DAY 5

Agree on the signals

Decide together what each level means for your parent, and who acts.

All seems well

FOR US THAT LOOKS LIKE · AND WHO RESPONDS

Worth checking in

FOR US THAT LOOKS LIKE · AND WHO RESPONDS

Please check today

FOR US THAT LOOKS LIKE · AND WHO RESPONDS

DAY 6

Make your first check-in calls

Use the five S's from Chapter 4 and fill in the log on page 24.

- [ ] Sleep
- [ ] Sustenance
- [ ] Spirits
- [ ] Schedule
- [ ] Steadiness

ONE THING I LEARNED

DAY 7

Review and decide

Look back at the week together. What worked? Where were the gaps?

DAYS SOMEONE CHECKED IN THIS WEEK (OUT OF 7)

WHAT FELT EASY

WHERE WE HAD GAPS

HOW MOM OR DAD FELT ABOUT IT

YOUR NEXT STEP

If your family covered all seven days without strain, wonderful. Keep going and revisit the plan monthly.

If there were gaps, you're in good company. That's exactly what Porchlight is for: a warm call every day, a summary for the whole circle, and an alert if something seems off or nobody answers.

Start a daily check-in →

porchlightcalls.com · month to month

PRINTABLE · PUT IT ON THE FRIDGE

Our family *check-in plan*

WE'RE CHECKING IN ON

THEIR PHONE NUMBER

DAILY CHECK-IN TIME

WHO CALLS

OUR CIRCLE

NAME	ROLE	PHONE	UPDATES BY

Normal for them is…

Call them today if…

Call the doctor if…

DOCTOR AND PHONE

PHARMACY AND PHONE

NEIGHBOR WITH A KEY

BACKUP FAMILY CONTACT

Emergency: call 911 **Crisis line:** call or text 988 **Eldercare Locator:** 1-800-677-1116

PRINTABLE · BRING IT TO APPOINTMENTS

Check-in *log*

A written timeline helps doctors far more than “she’s been off lately.”

DATE	SLEEP	MEALS	MOOD	STEADY?	NOTES AND WHAT WE DID

Tip: use a simple code like ✓ good, ~ so-so, × not good. Porchlight’s Family Circle plan keeps this log for you automatically.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

You don't have to *figure it out alone.*

Emergency

Call 911

For falls with injury, chest pain, trouble breathing, signs of stroke or sudden confusion.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call or text 988

Free, confidential support 24/7 for anyone in emotional distress, or worried about someone who is.

Eldercare Locator

1-800-677-1116 · eldercare.acl.gov

A free public service that connects you with your local Area Agency on Aging: meals, rides, in-home help and caregiver support.

CDC STEADI: Older Adult Fall Prevention

cdc.gov/steadi

Free brochures and checklists to make a home safer and talk with a doctor about fall risk.

SOURCES

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Older Adult Falls Data and Facts About Falls. cdc.gov/falls
- Office of the U.S. Surgeon General. Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation: The U.S. Surgeon General's Advisory on the Healing Effects of Social Connection and Community, 2023.
- AARP and the National Alliance for Caregiving. Caregiving in the US 2025.
- American Stroke Association and American Heart Association. BE FAST stroke warning signs.
- Porchlight product details from porchlightcalls.com, November 2026. Quotes are from Porchlight families; photos are illustrative.

This guide shares general information for families and is not medical, legal or financial advice. Porchlight is not a medical device, diagnosis, monitoring system or emergency response service. © 2026 Porchlight. Questions? hello@porchlightcalls.com

PORCHLIGHT

Leave the light on.
We'll make the call.

A warm daily call for Mom or Dad on the phone they already have, and a plain-language update for everyone who loves them.

Start a daily check-in →

porchlightcalls.com · hello@porchlightcalls.com

No app · No login · No device to charge · Cancel any time