



A REFLECTION GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

Is home *still* working?

*Twelve open questions for the
conversation around the kitchen table*

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*This guide is for you to think with – alongside
your parent, not about them.*

*The questions aren't a checklist, and they don't add up to a
verdict. They're prompts to turn over
before you next sit down together, or pick up the phone, or
notice you've been worrying for a while.*

*Whatever comes next, the conversation is with
them – this is just to help you find your way into it.*



01

A QUESTION ABOUT PHONE CALLS

When you ring, does the conversation feel like it used to?

We're often the first to hear a small change — in the pace of speaking, in what gets remembered from last week, in how long the call lasts.

Most weeks there's nothing in this. But over months, the phone tells you something.

02

A QUESTION ABOUT ARRIVING

What do you notice in the first ten minutes of a visit, before you've taken your coat off?



First impressions, before you get used to the room, are sometimes the most honest. The smell of the kitchen. What's on the bench. Whether the curtains are open. Those first ten minutes often hold more than the next two hours.

03

A QUESTION ABOUT THE KITCHEN

What does the kitchen tell you?

The fridge, the bread, the bin. Appetite often softens with age – that on its own isn't the worry. The kitchen is just one of the easier places to notice whether eating is still happening.

04

A QUESTION ABOUT MORNINGS

When you ring in the morning,
does it feel like the day has
started yet?



There's no right answer here. Some mornings start later as we get older — that's often nothing to worry about. But a change in pattern can be worth noticing.

05

A QUESTION ABOUT MOVING AROUND

How does your parent move from one room to another these days?

The pause before standing. The hand on the wall. The small correction halfway across a room. People adapt quietly to a body that has changed — and sometimes the family is the last to see the adapting happen.

06

A QUESTION ABOUT MEDICATIONS

Do you understand what your parent is actually taking these days, and what changed last?



Medicine routines change a few times a year — a new tablet, an old one stopped. If you've lost track, you're not alone. The GP can walk you through the current list with your parent's permission, and that's often the easiest way to find out.

07

A QUESTION ABOUT SLEEP

How is the night going?

Older people often sleep in shorter pieces, and that's normal. What's worth noticing is whether the night feels settled — or whether something has changed.

08

A QUESTION ABOUT WHAT
YOU FIRST NOTICED

When you started worrying
about your parent, what was it
you noticed first?



Most families notice something months before they go looking for a guide like this. Often it's a small thing — easily explained at the time, and easy to put aside. The first thing you noticed is usually the most reliable thing you've got.

09

A QUESTION ABOUT HOW IT FEELS

When you leave after a visit, how do you feel for the rest of the day?

Our own response to a visit often tells us something the conversation didn't. If you find yourself worried in the car on the way home — or relieved — that's information. Trust what you felt.

10

A QUESTION ABOUT WHO COMES
THROUGH THE DOOR

Who else comes through the
door in a normal week?



*The neighbour, the doctor, the friend from
bowls, the gardener. A home with people
moving through it is often a home doing
well. A home that's gone quiet over the last
year is something to notice.*

11

A QUESTION ABOUT THE POST

Where does the post end up these days?

Unopened letters, bills in a pile, a bank statement sitting for a fortnight. Sometimes that's just a busy life. Other times it's where admin first starts to slip. If it doesn't square with the parent you've always known, it's worth gentle attention.

12

A QUESTION ABOUT THEIR VIEW

And — when you ask your parent how they think it's going, what do they say?



The whole guide is incomplete without this question. Their view of their own life is the one that matters most. The questions in this guide are for you to think with — but the conversation is with them.



That's the twelve questions. There's no scoring, no summary – these pages are just for you.

*Thinking about a parent this way takes something out of you.
Don't rush what you do next.*

Most families I speak with come back to a guide like this weeks after first reading it – usually after something small has changed at home, and the questions feel more relevant. That's the point of it.

If you'd like to talk through any of it, you can reach me on 1300 220 914, between 9 and 4, Monday to Friday. There's no script and no follow-up calls – just a conversation, if you want one.



*— **Amber O'Connor***

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