



Some Good Advice About Bad Advice

By Michelle Woodbrey, Co-Founder of
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Would you ask for driving directions from someone who has never been to wherever it is you want to go?

Or, let's say you received a serious medical diagnosis. Would you take treatment advice from a stranger you met in a coffee shop?

In both of these cases, I'm guessing your answer is probably an emphatic, No!

And yet, sadly, when it comes to seeking advice for senior care, many people rely on anecdotal and non-expert suggestions provided by friends, coworkers, or social media – much of it outdated or just not applicable to their situation.

Of course, most of these suggestions are well meaning. But that doesn't make them helpful.

Crowdsourcing is Problematic

A recent post on my town's Facebook page asked, "Please give me your best suggestions for skilled nursing facilities for my mom who is on Medicaid and needs help with her diabetic injections."

There were dozens of responses. Things like: “My grandmother had a wonderful experience at Place X.” “Stay away from Place Y.” “Forget skilled nursing, stick with in-home care.”

I see this kind of thing every day and it drives me crazy! These are not helpful suggestions.

Crowdsourcing is fine if you’re looking for restaurant reviews or ideas on what to make for dinner. It doesn’t work for something as life-impacting as senior care. The stakes are too high and the tradeoffs and considerations are much too complicated.

Ask the Experts

The first step in getting valuable advice is getting clear on what you want to accomplish. Each person’s situation is different and you need advice that is specific to your needs, circumstances, and resources (financial and otherwise).

From there, you want to speak to qualified experts. Experts who...

... have data.

People who speak from their limited experience are sharing just a tiny slice of all the possible outcomes. When you speak with an expert, on the other hand, you are tapping into a broad wealth of unbiased information. In the case of senior care, you want facts regarding staffing ratios, rehab outcomes, performance stats, and much more.

... have up-to-date information.

Much of what you hear from other people is out of date. Somebody’s mother may have had a wonderful experience at Assisted Living X, but when you drill down a bit you may find that it was more than a year ago.

Plus, many times what you hear is not based on first-hand encounters. Rather, it’s something that was passed along from a friend or in a professional networking circle.

... have experience.

Those who have been working in a particular industry for years start to recognize and understand patterns. They know the questions to ask and things worth considering.

That’s important. Every situation is unique and senior care is a very specialized industry. When it comes to guiding seniors and their families, you want people who can help in making good choices.

... have skin in the game.

The helpful person on social media? He means well, but he knows he will not be involved in the outcome, so he isn't really invested in your situation.

When you hire an expert to advise you – on any topic – you are bringing in a trusted professional who is committed to helping you achieve the best result.

Get the Advice You Need

Senior care touches so many of us in so many ways; it's no wonder most people have some experience with it and a point of view. Unfortunately, that point of view can do more harm than good.

Feel free to compare notes and learn what you can from others. But when it comes time to start planning and making these important decisions, make sure you qualify the advice you are getting and work with those who have your unique goals in mind.

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