



Friends of St. John the Caregiver

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From *A Catholic Guide to Caring for Your Aging Parent*
by Monica Dodds
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A Driving Skills Checklist for Family Caregivers

The aging process may affect your loved one's ability to drive. As a person grows older, there can be a loss of hearing and visual acuity, changes in physical strength, and a slower reaction time. You may need to discuss driving with your loved one. Here are some warning signs to look out for:

Driver Errors

- Trouble merging into traffic
- Difficulty seeing sides of the road
- Using incorrect signals
- Driving too fast or too slow
- Exercising poor judgment when making left turns
- Drifting into the wrong lane
- Trouble staying in the proper lane
- Confusion at exits
- Tickets (moving violations or warnings)
- Failure to stop at signs or lights
- Failing to give the right of way

Problem Behaviors

- Riding the brake
- Hitting curbs
- Stopping in traffic for no reason
- Not parking between lines or using two spaces
- Agitation and irritation
- Difficulty turning corners
- Frequent close calls
- Confusing the gas and brake pedals or having trouble moving the foot from one pedal to the other
- Getting lost in familiar places
- Misinterpreting or disobeying traffic signs
- Forgetting to turn on the headlights or use turn signals

Underlying Problems

- Easily distracted
- Difficulty turning to look over the shoulder to see blind spot when changing lanes or backing up
- Delayed response to the unexpected: bikers, pedestrians, traffic signs, roadside activity, potential trouble
- Medical condition that may affect ability to drive safely

- Medication that may cause drowsiness
- Difficulty judging distance between one's own car and the car ahead
- Difficulty adjusting vision between dark and light or light and dark (such as when facing oncoming headlights)
- Ignoring potential mechanical trouble with the car

More Clues That It's Time to be Concerned:

- Others not wanting to ride along
- Lack of confidence in abilities and nervousness when driving
- Increase in number of other drivers honking horns
- Dents and scrapes on car
- Using a copilot or asking passengers to help look out for cars
- Car accidents

Remember that you need to make sure alternative transportation is available if your loved one is unable to drive. Now is the time for good planning.

For more free information, visit YourAgingParent.com, a program of the Friends of St. John the Caregiver.

To receive a free copy of "The Little Book of Caregiver Prayers," send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Friends of St. John the Caregiver, P.O. Box 320, Mountlake Terrace, WA 98043.