

Caring for someone with dementia

Introduction

Becoming a carer can be uncertain and stressful. These worries and feelings are normal and completely understandable. This resource hopes to provide you with information and strategies which should help you cope with this transisiton.

Key points: Make use of support early, take care of yourself, go one day at a time.

Strategies

1. Plan for the future.

Arrange for repeat prescriptions, groceries, regular respite care. Relieve these responsibilities where you can to save your time and energy.

2. Establish a daily routine.

Remove uncertainty with a schedule. Certain times of the day will work better for certain activities for you and the person you care for.

3. Look after your mental and physical health.

Staying happy and healthy will boost your immune system and energy levels. Rest when needed and where possible; try to stay positive.

4. Keep connected.

Talk with family and friends; share how you are feeling. Consider joining one of the forums available where you may talk with other carers.

Activities

What we do with our day affects how we think, feel and behave. Planned activities can provide a sense of structure, routine and purpose.

Below are some activities that can be done with your loved one in the home; try to focus on the activity rather than the end result and remember that rest is also a very important part of any routine.

- Involve your loved one in de-cluttering e.g. tidying and sorting through cupboards.
- Work on your garden together or set up a station inside where seeds can be planted

Tip #1: "Can you help me with ... ?" can be a useful way of introducing an activity.

- Take a walk around your garden if possible, taking time to look at and talk about what you see
- Make cards to send to family and friends.
- Listen to short audiobooks
- Play board games or computer games together.
- Look through family photo albums, magazines, old postcards, books etc.

Tip #2: You may consider setting up different areas of association around your home for activities.

- Create a rummage box filled with items that your loved one can safely pick up, feel, explore, and look through
- Do puzzles or jigsaws at a table
- Paint, colour, draw
- Bake together- it might be that your loved one helps with part of a task (e.g. mixing the ingredients in a bowl with a spoon)



- Plan some karaoke and sing together
- Listen to your loved one's favourite music or watch their favourite film and talk about the memories associated with these
- Recite poems and proverbs from childhood and reminisce about these



Tip #3: You may need to help your loved one get started with an activity by demonstrating it first.

Self-care tips for carers

Self-Care

Take care of your basic needs: Rest when you can and eat sufficient and healthy food. Drink plenty of water to help stay hydrated.

Engage in physical activity: Even simple exercises at home will boost your mood, build stamina and reduce the risk of injury.

Stay connected to family and friends: Arrange to speak to someone most days on the phone, through social media or in person.

Take regular breaks: Caregiving is a marathon, so it's essential to pace yourself is to take regular little breaks to preserve your energy.

Techniques

Five Senses Mindfulness Exercise
Take 10 Breaths
Mindfulness of Household Activities
Dropping Anchor
Mindfulness of Pleasant Activities



- What can you hear, see, smell, taste, feel?
- Feel the air flowing through you
- Focus on the details - one step at a time
- Root in place, focus on your body
- Commit to your downtime, forget all else

PMR Exercise

When we are anxious or stressed, our bodies often feel tense. This is our fight or flight response reacting to feelings of stress as if they are a very real threat.

PMR helps to show our bodies that we aren't in danger by deliberately tensing and relaxing muscles in each part of our body, signalling to our minds that we are safe. Lay down. Start with your feet and slowly move up the body.

- Feet
- Legs
- Glutes/hips
- Arms/hands
- Neck/shoulders
- Jaw
- Forehead



Behaviour

When behaviour changes, consider these universal needs and how they can be met:

| |
|--|
| Comfort and freedom from pain Consider temperature, seating position, noises, hydration etc Check with a GP if there is a sudden change in behaviour and you are concerned. |
| Fun Support the person to connect with their sense of fun/humour. |
| Esteem needs – feeling valued, skilled Support the person in using the skills they still have. |
| Feeling safe Shadows can be misinterpreted. Make sure rooms are well lit where possible. Offer an explanation of the situation in a way that the person can understand. |
| Control over environment and possessions Offer choices in food, clothing, activity etc. |
| Routine and patterns Try to maintain a routine to help the day feel consistent and predictable. Take note of patterns in behaviour or distress and make sure to pace tasks so as not to rush them. |
| Occupation and exploration Support the person with activities they can still manage e.g. listening to music, arts & crafts, puzzles, games, household jobs (dusting, washing/drying up), relaxation. |
| Positive touch Holding hands, hugs, kisses, massage – whatever you both feel comfortable with. |
| Love and belonging Help the person to connect with their important people and the community. Sometimes we can validate an 'incorrect' viewpoint with the aim to help and reassure the person. |

Resources

VR Tours from the Louvre, London National Gallery, Natural History, Science, British Museum, Cardiff, CADW, Coed Cadw, Snowdonia, Visit Wales
 Subscriptions to the National Theatre, Musical OST on YouTube, Disneys Virtual Viewings, Cirque de Soleil, Whats On Stage-free
 Dance for Seniors, Chair Zumba, Chair Yoga, NHS Sitting Exercises, Apetito Meals, International Dysphagia Diet
 Live Cameras at San Diego Zoo, Chester Zoo, Folly Farm, Wild Heart Animal Sanctuary, Blue Planet
 Free Books at the Open Library, ReadAnyBook, Internet Archive, Coloring Book Pics