

## Strategies for day to day living

### Be realistic – about the disease

It is important, though difficult, to be realistic about the disease and its effects. First of all, you have to accept that the person with Alzheimer's Disease or dementia is not going to get better. The disease is progressive and gradually, they are going to get worse. Once you accept this, it will be easier to be realistic about what you expect of them.

Secondly you will have to accept that the person with Alzheimer's Disease is not the person they once were. They may not be as loving, caring or considerate as they used to be and you will need to accept them as they are today and not as you have known them in the past.

### Be realistic – about yourself

It is also important to realise that caring for someone takes time and energy, there will be limits to what you can do. Accept any physical limitations you might have, decide on which things are most important to you and your patient, and do not be afraid to ask for help if necessary. Which do you value most, a walk with the person you are caring for, time by yourself, activities you have always enjoyed with others, or a clean and tidy house? There is no "right" answer to this question. Only you know what matters most to you at any given time.



Besides making choices, you will have to set limits on what you can do in a day. It may be difficult to admit that you can't do everything and it is not easy to say "no". To be realistic, you will need to think carefully about how much you do and are comfortably able to do.

## Accept your feelings

- When taking care of someone with Alzheimer's Disease, you will have a lot of mixed feelings. In just one day, you may feel contented, angry, frustrated, guilty, happy, sad, loving, embarrassed, afraid, resentful, hopeful and hopeless.
- These feelings may be confusing and difficult to handle. However, they are neither good nor bad, they are normal.
- It is frustrating and emotionally stressful to live with someone who often forgets who you are and what you say, especially if the patient is a parent, relative or spouse. It is normal to be angry when you have to alter your plans but try to avoid this by planning well in advance for someone to relieve you of your duties.
- One of the hardest feelings to deal with is guilt. People often feel guilty when they are impatient or short tempered. or when they want time for themselves. Feeling guilty about not being perfect will only make you feel worse.
- Negative feelings do not mean you are not a good caregiver. They mean you are human.
- Learn to manage your stress.



Ref. estateplanningsocal.com/images/

## Share your feelings

- Do you keep your feelings and problems to yourself? Many people do. It is very important to share your feelings with others as this may relieve your stress.
- Find someone you are comfortable with, talk to them about how you feel and what is troubling you. This person may be a close friend, a family member or someone you met at an Alzheimer's disease support group; sharing these experiences can be helpful.

- Share your feelings
- Look for good things
- Accept your feelings

### Look for good things

Your attitude to life can make a great difference in the way you feel. Try to look at the positive side of things, look at what the person is still able to do rather than at what they can't do. For example, even though they can't prepare dinner, they may still be able to peel potatoes. Try not to focus on your losses and problems too much. Give yourself credit for the care and support you are providing to the patient, the important role that you fill. Try to make the good times happen. There can still be moments that are good and worthwhile. Take a nice walk to the shops or to the park, eat and ice cream together, look at family photo albums. The good moments may be frequent but they are still there.

Please contact the DEMENTIA SA Office

Support | Awareness | Education | Counseling | Training | Resource centre | Advocacy  
info@dementiasa.org or support@dementiasa.org www.dementiasa.org

National Helpline 0860 MEMORY / 0860 636 679

## Take care of yourself

Your own health is important, do not ignore it. Eat regular nutritious meals, try to exercise regularly and find ways to relax and make sure that you get the rest you need. Make regular appointments with your doctor for check-ups. Taking care of yourself will help you deal with stress and allow you to continue giving care.

## Take time for yourself

You need regular breaks, so that you can maintain your interests outside of caregiving. Do not wait until you are exhausted to plan this. Take time to keep up with things that are important to you. This will give you strength to continue and help to prevent you from feeling lonely, isolated and out of touch. To have time to yourself, you will need someone else to take care of your patient. Prepare for this by inviting the new caregiver in for a short visit beforehand; this will help the new caregiver become familiar with the person, your house and your daily routines. It will make your time away easier for everyone.

## Look for humour

Alzheimer's Disease is serious, but a sense of humour will help to get you through difficult times. Seeing humour in your situation does not lessen the sincerity of your care or respect for the patient. People with Alzheimer's Disease do not necessarily lose their sense of humour or desire to have fun. Taking care of someone will be more pleasant if you can share a joke and laugh together.

## Help others understand

You will need to become a teacher, as it will be important for you to explain Alzheimer's Disease and its effects to your family and friends. Tell them what you have learned about communicating and giving care. With this knowledge, they will be more comfortable when visiting the patient or able to help you give care or give you the opportunity to have some time to yourself.

## Get Help

Information, support, relief and practical help on all aspects of the disease are available to help you to give good care, cope with the challenges and to look after yourself.

Please contact the DEMENTIA SA Office

Support | Awareness | Education | Counseling | Training | Resource centre | Advocacy  
*info@dementiasa.org or support@dementiasa.org* *www.dementiasa.org*

**National Helpline 0860 MEMORY / 0860 636 679**

## Notes:

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### Contact us:

3rd Floor,  
State House,  
3 Rose Street,  
Cape Town

P.O. Box 16421  
Vlaeberg  
8018

Tel: (021) 421 0077/78  
Email: [info@dementiasa.org](mailto:info@dementiasa.org)  
Or [support@dementiasa.org](mailto:support@dementiasa.org)



[www.dementiasa.org](http://www.dementiasa.org)

Please contact the DEMENTIA SA Office

Support | Awareness | Education | Counseling | Training | Resource centre | Advocacy  
[info@dementiasa.org](mailto:info@dementiasa.org) or [support@dementiasa.org](mailto:support@dementiasa.org) [www.dementiasa.org](http://www.dementiasa.org)

National Helpline 0860 MEMORY / 0860 636 679