Caring for Someone With Alzheimer’s

by NEWLIFEOUTLOOK TEAM

Caring for a Loved One With Alzheimer’s Disease

When a loved one is diagnosed with Alzheimer’s, it can be quite heart breaking to cope with the news. Understanding the condition better and knowing what to do will help make life easier for you as a caregiver and for the patient as well.

Allowing people with Alzheimer’s to enjoy a certain quality of life and helping them do things they like is certainly challenging but not impossible. As your loved one's Alzheimer's progresses, you'll need to keep the following points in mind:

Hygiene

You'll need to make sure your loved one keeps up with hygiene habits. Ensuring they bathe, brush their teeth and clean up after meals is important. While helping them achieve these goals, it’s important to take care that they do most of it on their own with just a gentle reminder or push from you to help.

Nutrition

Eating well and proper diet are essential in any situation. Particularly with someone who has Alzheimer’s disease and lives alone, consider stocking up easy to prepare or heat-and-eat meals for a week. This ensures that they maintain a level of independence but do not have to go through a long process during meal times. Calling to check if they have eaten and what they ate can also help.

Exercise

An important part of caring for someone with Alzheimer is making sure they get ample physical exercise. Keeping their body fit helps to also engage their mind and keep it active, and a healthy weight allows for easier care. A walk together is a good way to get started with this goal.

Identification

Ensure your loved one has a form of identification and contact details on their person at all times, for example an engraved bracelet with their name and contact details. This will allow them to return home safely if they happen to wander off when their mind is in a haze.

Keeping Social

It is important to ensure that your loved one is not isolated or withdrawn from social company and activities. Take them out to activities they enjoy, like dancing for example. Group activities and therapy will also help them to stay

happy and engaged.

However, if going to these activities makes them feel inept and upset at being unable to participate, consider changing to something simpler, or something they can simply watch and enjoy.

Next page: putting yourself first, thinking outside the box and being prepared.

Put Yourself First

Alzheimer's places incredible physical and emotional challenges on the caregiver, and it's important you don't forget about your own needs as you get swept up in being a caregiver.

Build a Support Network

Consider joining a support group to share experiences and insights. A group allows you to talk about the issues you face with people who are going through something similar, which will help lower your stress level and help you feel less isolated. The experiences of others may even provide you with new strategies to try.

If it's difficult for you to attend a meeting, you could try an online discussion forum. Sharing the day-to-day challenges of caring for someone with Alzheimer's will help prepare you for the difficult decisions ahead. Questions about finances or when to place your loved one in a long-term care facility are especially hard.

Building your support network will take some time. Understand that you will need help and learn to ask for it. Ask a friend or relative if they can look after your loved one while you go to a movie or out to dinner.

Most people are happy to help but may not know how they can assist you, so be specific in your requests. Having a friend take your loved one for a walk on Tuesday morning is much better than setting a vague plan for later in the week.

Be Kind to Yourself

If you attend a yoga class each week or belong to a book club, keep it up. Or start something new that interests you. Having regular time away will contribute to your overall health and wellbeing. As your loved one's Alzheimer's progresses you may want to consider enrolling them in an adult day program or scheduling respite care so that you both can have a break.

Developing your coping skills involves being kind to yourself. Alzheimer's disease is difficult to live with for both the patient and the caregiver. Grief, depression and anger are common feelings. Cultivating your emotional awareness will assist you in meeting the challenges of caring for someone with Alzheimer's. Knowing what upsets you will help you identify ways to cope with that upset.

Think Outside the Box

Try to think creatively about handling situations with Alzheimer's sufferers. Will offering two choices of clothing over the entire contents of the closet help with getting your loved one dressed in the morning? What other alternatives might you try? Understand that you'll need to learn to change and adapt as your loved one will lose the ability to do so over time.

Be Prepared

Bear in mind that your loved one is likely to be worried, withdrawn, and even afraid of you on occasion due to their inability to remember faces and facts from their daily life. Formulate a plan for how you will deal with these situations so they don't catch you off guard.

It can be painful to watch someone you love change and forget about their best memories and moments. With help and support, you can learn to cope and effectively care for a loved one who suffers from Alzheimer's disease.