



5 Strategies to Make Living With Alzheimer's Easier

by BECKY YOUNG

Living With Alzheimer's: 5 Tips to Improve Your Daily Life

There are many things you can do to improve your quality of life when living with Alzheimer's. As the disease progresses you will probably find you get frustrated or confused easily, but if you take these steps they will help you to feel calm and safe and more in control.

1. Find a Routine That Works for You

Changes can be difficult to cope with as an Alzheimer's sufferer, and a familiar schedule and environment usually helps.

There will be times when you will need to break your routine. For instance, for a doctor's appointment. In these cases, leave yourself a reminder about the visit on the fridge or mark a large calendar in your home.

It can also be helpful to leave notes around your home with directions such as, "This way to the bathroom." This will help keep your surroundings feeling familiar and comfortable.

2. Limit the Amount of Movement and Sound

You'll find that crowds and noise can easily overwhelm you. Keep distractions in check with these few simple tips:

- **Try not to shop in crowds.** Instead of a busy shopping center, go to a small store, or go when the shops are not likely to be busy.
- **Gather in small groups.** Even though you might like to see the whole family at the holidays, you may get flustered by all the grandchildren at once! To make visits better for everyone, have smaller groups of family members come in at different times.
- **Keep the TV off when you are doing other activities.** You may find it more difficult to tell the difference between what is actually going on in the room and what is on TV.

3. Find Things You Are Able to Do

Spending time on familiar tasks and hobbies can help you to feel productive and happy. As long as you are able to do it safely, it is a great idea.

You might need to take a different approach with a favorite activity or do things with the support of people you love. For example, if you love to bake, you might still be able to stir the mixture after your loved one has measured out the ingredients. You could drop the cookies onto a cool sheet while they get the pans in and out of the hot oven. If you get confused by all of the settings on the washing machine, you may still be able to take towels out of the dryer and fold them.

My Nan, who is an Alzheimer's sufferer, has never lost her ability to knit and it has become her lifeline. She gets to continue to spend her days doing something she has always loved and even get involved in some amazing projects!

4. Surround Yourself With Understanding People

Alzheimer's makes it difficult to improve skills or remember directions. So, your loved ones need to make adjustments for how much you can (and cannot) do.

For example, if you set the table and it is not done quite perfectly, you want people around you who are going to quietly rearrange the silverware later, without it being a problem. Or, instead of reminding you not to drink out of the milk container over and over, buy you your own container and put your name on it.

You may also find that you become flustered when you have to make decisions. So, you need people around you who you trust to take control of some everyday choices. For example, rather than being asked what you want to wear, you may find it easier to be given a choice between only two blouses, or to simply have one picked for you and be complimented on how you look wearing it.

At a restaurant, you may find it easier if somebody helps you to look at the menu and then suggest a few items they know you would enjoy. It's a good idea to sit down with your supports who are open to caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's while you still have the capacity to be really open and honest about the way you would like them to manage your condition.

5. Be Prepared for Sundowning

At night, some people with Alzheimer's grow upset more easily. This is called sundowning.

Take these steps to help calm yourself down in the evenings when living with Alzheimer's:

- **Turn on more lights.** You may be more comfortable in well-lit rooms.
- **Have a family member or care member pop in to reassure you at night.** You may be worried that an intruder is trying to break into your home. Have somebody come in who will not dismiss your fears, but instead, let you watch them check that the doors and windows are locked and offer reassurance that nobody is in your home or garden. Little steps like that may help you to relax.