

Supporting someone with dementia

But they seem fine...

- In the early stages of dementia, people try to hide their symptoms.
- Many times early symptoms are ignored as a “normal part of aging”.
- Addressing dementia early on puts a plan in place to **BEFORE** a crisis happens.

Probing for more information

- Check-in over the phone or in person
 - Ask about the specifics of their day/week
 - Ask about changes in their lives
 - Do they have an accurate sense of time?
 - Do they hang up the phone quickly?
- Ask local family members, friends & community members



Warning Signs for early stages

- Loss of interest in activities
- Unpaid bills
- Lost/hidden items
- Confusion about schedules
- Greater difficulty in daily tasks
- Telling stories from further in the past

ASSESSING THE SITUATION

Dementia Suspected...NOW WHAT?

Time to visit

- Spend an extended period of time with them
 - Figure out where the person with dementia is at...
 - Be aware of safety concerns

Bring in the community

- Who lives close by/ with the loved one?
- Who is aware of the day to day struggles of the person with dementia?
- What are the resources available?

As a familial community: Prioritize

- Safety & Health first
- Get evaluated by a physician
- Figure out roles

Planning for the future

Practicalities

- Important safety mile markers
- Moving forward; what are the next steps of care.
 - Using the resources from the community

Legal & Financial Documentation

- Will
- Living Will
- Power of Attorney vs. Durable Power of Attorney
- Assigning someone to be in charge of any estate/property

Long distance caregiving tips

Specific to Long-Distance Caregivers

- Be proactive.
- Don't sweat the small things
- If there is a caregiver living with the person with dementia—DO NOT GIVE ADVICE, rather offer support

Great Tasks for Long-Distance Caregivers

- Financial support
- Assist with completing documentation
- Emotional support for the local caregiver

Behaviors & Activities

AGRESSION

Possible Causes

- Pain
- Over stimulating environment
- Feeling of being lost
- Being unable to communicate

Possible Responses

- Don't get upset
- Evaluate immediate need--Rule out pain
- Focus on the underlying feeling
- Change activity focus---focus on a relaxing activity

CONFUSION

Causes

- Progressive memory loss and brain cell damage
- If the change is sudden:
 - Changes in living arrangements
 - Possible infection

Possible Responses

- Be calm
- Use photos and items to remind person of people and places
- Enter in to the time in which they are present
- Offer corrections as suggestions
 - “I think that is a chair”
- Don’t take it personally

SUNDOWNING

Possible Causes

- End of day exhaustion
- Dimly lit rooms with shadows
- Impacted “internal body clock”
- Inability to separate dreams from reality
- Less need for sleep

Possible Responses

- Keep the home well lit
- Avoid big dinners
- Maintain a schedule
- Be ware of your own feelings of tired
- Plan active days
- Identify patterns

PREVENTING WANDERING

- Offer reassurance if the person feels lost or confused.
- Avoid busy and over-stimulating places
- Place locks out of the line of sight
- Make sure basic needs have been met
- Adapt the doors
 - Color change
 - Lock change
- Be present

MAKE A PLAN FOR WANDERING

- Keep a list of community who you can call for help
- Follow the direction of the persons dominant hand
- Keep an updated photo of the person

Communication

Changes

- Repeat words
- Loses train of thought
- Invents new words
- Reverts to primary language
- Speak less
- Have difficulty organizing words

When talking...

- Identify yourself, and your relationship to the person
- Use the person's name
- Use short words and sentences
- Speak slowly
- Be patient
- Use statements instead of questions
- Avoid arguing/correcting
- Give visual cues

Engaging with your loved one

PICKING AN ACTIVITY

- Evaluate what the person's interest
- Know their current level of ability
- Focus on the journey not the end result
- Plan according to the time of day

COMPLETING THE ACTIVITY

- Join in the fun—assist when things get difficult.
- Make sure your loved on has a sense of purpose
- If at first you don't succeed, try again later
- Don't correct the person through the process
- Engage the person in conversation

Other Resources

- Geriatric Care Managers
- Alzheimer's Association
- Support Groups