

After the Alzheimer's Diagnosis: Practical Information for Family Caregivers



Providing Programs & Services Since 1982

What we will cover:

- Building your support team
- Strategies to manage the emotions caregiving can bring
- Self-care for the caregiver
- Key communication tips
- Planning successful activities for engagement & stimulation
- Local resources for families



Caregiver Strategies

Manage Challenging Emotions
Build Your Support Team
Practicing Self-Care

Remember, it's okay to...

...take a break

...ask for help

...feel lonely sometimes

... feel frustrated sometimes



Emotions that Caregiving can Bring

- **Guilt**
- **Denial**
- **Blame**



Build Your Support Team

Connect 2 Culture & more - social, cultural and art activities around Orange County



connect **2** culture®

For more information contact Early Stage Coordinator
at 949-757-3759 or earlystage@alzoc.org

Build Your Support Team

Education & Support Groups

Living Well with Mild Memory Loss

A 4-week education/support group for adults experiencing early stage symptoms of memory loss and their care partners

(Meets in different locations)

Support Groups across Orange County

(Meets in different locations)

Stay Engaged with What Matters Most



Practice Self-Care

- **Plan now for small changes that can make a big difference**
- **Write 1 or 2 goals you're willing to work on in the coming weeks**



Practice Self-Care: Ways to Take a Break



Light a Candle



Relax in a Bubble Bath



Buy Some Flowers



Take a Walk Outside



Pet Something Furry



Write in a Journal

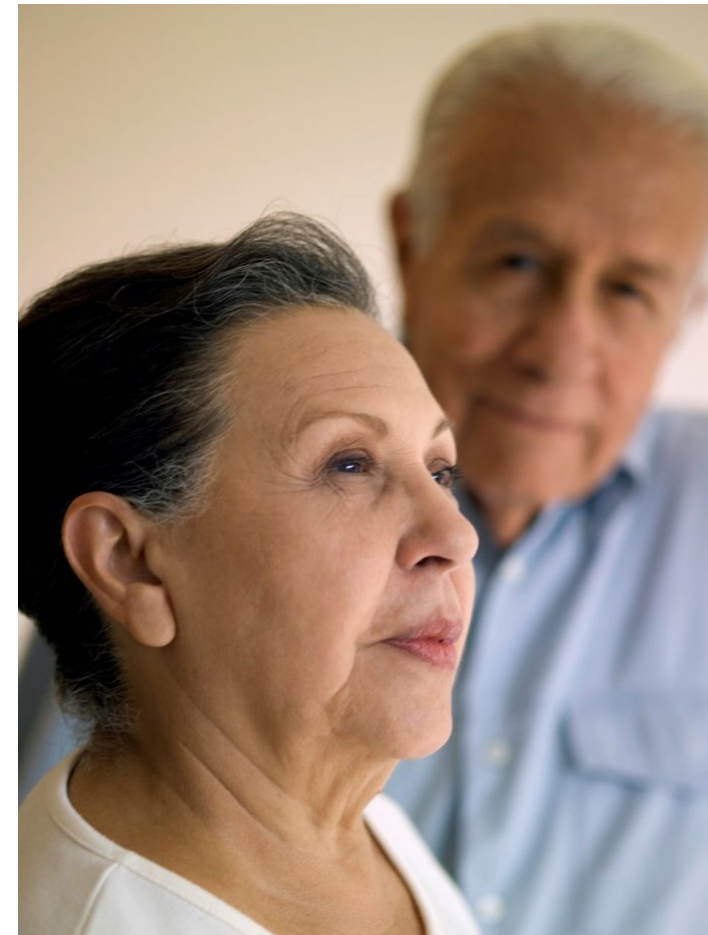


Color with Crayons



Take a Nap

Key Communication Tips



Communication Breakdowns



- **What happens when communication breaks down?**
- **How would you feel?**
- **How do you think a person with dementia feels?**

Beyond Words...

“I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”

~ Maya Angelou



A Disease of Emotions

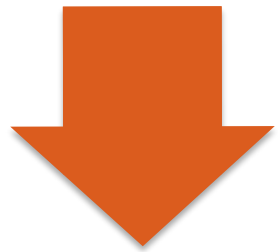
Confusion

Discomfort

**Behavior
Expressions**

Adapting our Approach

**Effective communication
and flexibility**



**Increased well-being,
self-esteem; reduction of
frustration**



Communication: Beyond Words

Major components that determine the success of communication:

55% Body language

38% Tone of voice

7% Content or actual words

7%-38%-55% Rule . Prof. Albert Mehrabian, UCLA

Principles of Communication

- **Understand what isn't possible to change**
- **Thoughts, beliefs and actions significantly impact behavior**
- **All behavior has meaning**
- **Connecting *always* overrides the task**

Benefits of Caring Conversations



- **Fosters self-esteem**
- **Reduces frustration**
- **Strengthens independence**
- **Enhances relationship**

Steps to Caring Conversations

- ➔ Check the environment (distractions)
- ➔ Adjust your approach
- ➔ Facilitate a connection
- ➔ Be a good listener
- ➔ Focus on remaining skills

Effective Communication

Don't:

- Reason
- Argue / Confront
- Remind
- Question recent memory
- Take it personally

Do:

- Repeat
- Accept blame
- Leave room
- Agree
- Use distraction

Remember...

- Breathe
- Respond to feelings
- Provide reassurance
- Distract and redirect
- Remove yourself & return later



Example Scenario: Caring Conversations

“What doctor’s appointment? There’s nothing wrong with me.”

DON’T: (reason) *“You’ve been seeing the doctor every 3 months. It’s written in the calendar and I told you yesterday.”*

DO: (short explanation) *“It’s just a regular check up.”*

(accept blame) *“I’m sorry if I forgot to tell you.”*

(distract) *“Let’s stop for ice cream on the way back!”*



Successful Activities for Engagement & Stimulation

The Goal of Effective Activities

- Bring meaning, purpose, stimulation, joy and contentment to day-to-day life
- Utilize your loved one's remaining strengths, talents, and skills during any stage of their illness
- Can be done alone or with care partner, and can include family members and friends
- Normalize the person's life
- Focus is on enjoyment rather than results

Source: National Alzheimer's Association: Activities at Home brochure



Important Considerations



- Everything you do with your loved one is an activity, even personal care!
- Always focus on the connection rather than the task at hand
- No matter how far people with dementia have progressed in the disease, they **NEVER** lose the desire to communicate and connect with you.

A Holistic Approach



Photo by [Romain Rullaud](#) on [Unsplash.com](#)

Engage the whole person

- **Physical**
- **Emotional**
- **Cognitive**
- **Spiritual**

Planning Person-Centered Activities

- Consider your loved one's life history, personal preferences, needs & interests.
- Activities should produce comfort; a feeling of belonging, having a purpose or occupation & a sense of identity.
- Activities don't have to be elaborate, they just have to be a "fit"



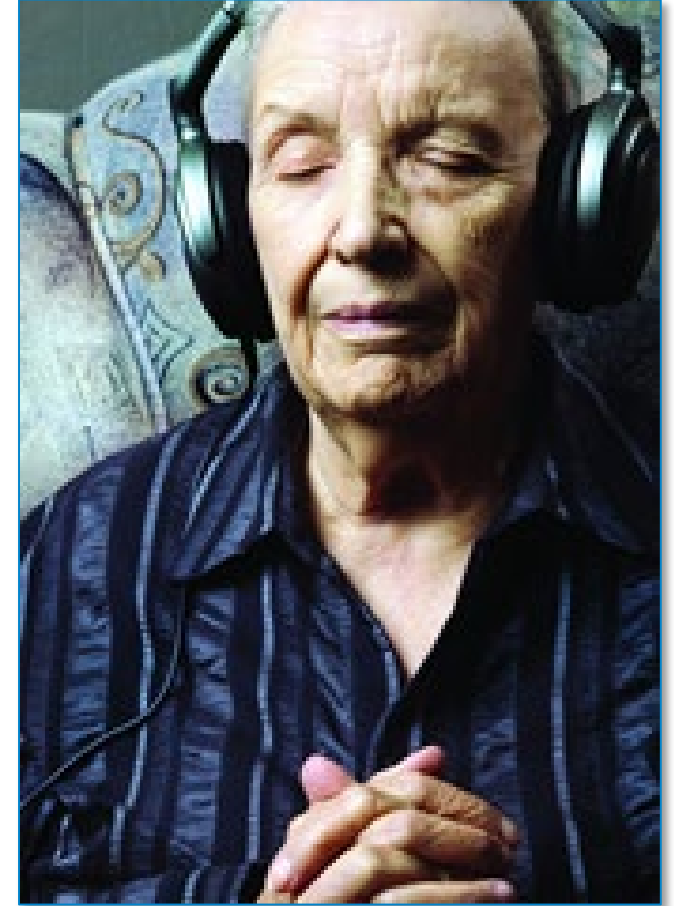
What is Contented Involvement?

- An emotional state which occurs when person with dementia is doing something that is keeping him/her occupied and engaged.
- “In the zone” between over & under stimulation
- Families can develop a short list of soothing activities which can engage their loved one and bring them back to a state of contented involvement!



Contented Involvement Activities

- Looking at photo books
- Having some tea
- Sitting in a chair and looking outside
- Holding a familiar object
- Listening to music
- Taking a walk
- Holding hands



Making an Activity Box

- iPod loaded with his/her favorite music
- Photographs, letters, old greeting cards
- Items, or images of items, relating to your loved one's previous career
- Mementos and souvenirs, maps
- Playing cards, adult coloring book, word search or crosswords
- Favorite book (Bible, poetry, etc.)

Expressive Arts

- Engage all the senses- touch, sight, sound, smell
- Music- Singing, making music, playing an instrument, drumming
- Writing- write a poem, make a list, sentence completion
- Crafting- Sewing, Knitting, Scrapbooking, Collage
- Reminiscing memorable events, favorite memories
- Painting, adult coloring books, zen doodling
- “Memories in the Making”





Local Resources for Families

Telephone Support: Helpline

- Disease Education and Caregiver Support
- Legal, financial and living-arrangement decisions
- Medicare and Medi-Cal benefits
- Government Benefits
- Professional and community services



Telephone Support: Helpline

- Medications and treatment options
- Skills to provide quality care
- Strategies to reduce stress and manage lifestyle changes
- Clinical trials of potential treatments
- Home & Community Safety
- Caregiver Action Plan



Programs & Services

- Family Care Consultation
- Education and support programs for families and professionals
- Family Orientation
- Caregiver Support Groups
- Interfaith Outreach & Services
- Wandering and Safety education
- Early Stage education, discussion & support groups, social & cultural activities
- Public Policy and Advocacy

Adult Day Health Centers

Alzheimer's Orange County owns and operates two adult day health care centers:

- Acacia Adult Day Services (Garden Grove)
- South County Adult Day Services (Laguna Woods)

Adult Day Health Centers

Social and healthcare programs to help frail and at-risk older adults:

- Comprehensive healthcare (nursing, supervision, medication management, and personal care)
- Medical supervision for those who have physical and cognitive impairment
- Comprehensive therapies (maintenance PT, OT and Speech Therapy, Music Therapy)
- Monthly communication with physician on progress

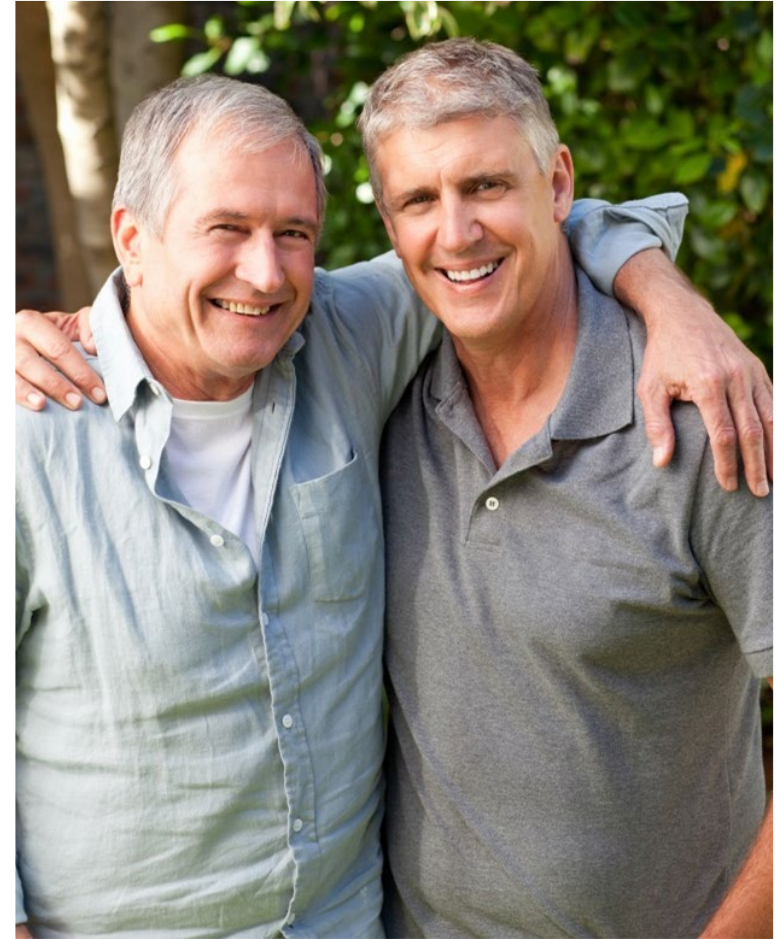
Adult Day Health Centers

Social and healthcare programs to help frail and at-risk older adults:

- Activities & exercise (recreational and creative programs)
- Nutritious breakfast, lunch and snack
- Opportunities for social interaction with peers
- Round trip transportation
- Family and caregiver resources, education and support groups

Benefits of Adult Day Health Centers

- Keeps families together at home
- Promotes independence, socialization, and healthy daily routines
- Results in greater medication adherence
- Provides synchronized care with health care providers
- Reduces stress levels for family caregivers



Connect With Us: Call our Helpline

Our telephone helpline provides information, emotional support, education and resource referrals.



HELPLINE:

844-435-7259

Connect With Us: “Like” us on Facebook

By connecting with us on Facebook you will have access to:

- Local Alzheimer's news
- The latest dementia science updates
- Alzheimer's OC events
- Facebook Caregiver Support Group
- Full calendar of events, free to attend

“Like” us at:

facebook.com/alzoc



Connect With Us: Visit our Website



Alzheimer's Orange County (ALZOC®) provides free programs and services for local families affected by Alzheimer's and dementia.

Have questions? Call our Helpline at 844-HELP-ALZ (844-435-7259)

Visit our website to learn more about who we are and what we do.

Get access to free educational materials, and view our calendar for upcoming workshops and community presentations.

Visit: www.alzoc.org