

If You Do Nothing Else, **Do These 5 Things**

1

Establish Legal Responsibility. Create legal documents that will be helpful to you and to your loved one. Establish your legal rights to make decisions on behalf of your loved one and make sure that there is someone legally designated to do this for you. This includes creating Powers of Attorney for health care and finances for your loved one and for yourself.

2

Get a Second Opinion. Always seek more than one medical opinion on diagnosis and an established course of medication treatment. Obtain a professional geriatric cognitive assessment to determine a baseline functioning level, and have it explained in detail.

3

Care for Yourself. A healthy, rested caregiver is an effective caregiver. Consider your typical weekly schedule, and look for concrete ways that family/friends could help you; what tasks can you delegate?

4

Join a Support Group. You need support, advice and an empathetic ear from those who have walked in your shoes and understand your challenges. Explore the possibility of a support group for your loved one, too, if they are in the early stages of the disease.

5

Plan for the Future. Alzheimer's and related dementias are progressive diseases. Do your research and know what lies ahead to plan accordingly. Register your loved one with MedicAlert/Safe Return (national) and the Take Me Home registry (if in SD County). Become familiar now with the in-home and residential-based resources that you may need to access in the future; don't wait until a crisis to learn what's available.


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