



The Three Cs of Caring for Someone with Dementia: Communicating, Coping, and Connecting - A Book Bag of Self-Care Tips

Dementia can be caused by many different medical conditions. Many of us think of only older adults having dementia, but due to all the different types of dementia, it really can encompass all ages.

There tend to be different stages of caregiving when dealing with these progressive diseases. Each of the stages presents their own unique difficulties, which can be exhausting and challenging for the caregiver.

Common Challenges of Stage One

- Adjusting to the reality of the diagnosis
- Coping with the emotional distress of you and your loved one

Coping Strategies

- Identify roles and responsibilities of loved ones
- Learn about the illness and learn about new responsibilities
- Plan ahead for legal protections, healthcare proxy, power of attorney
- Develop and maintain routines
- Adjust and adapt expectations
- Secure home safety
- Develop strategies to cope with the emotions
- Develop a support network

Common Challenges of Stage Two

- Becoming a caretaker/taskmaster
- Directing and assisting with bathing, dressing, toileting, meals
- Coping with emotional states of confusion, agitation, anger, paranoia
- Managing difficult behaviors such as repetition, wandering, resisting direction
- Coping with caregiver isolation
- Coping with the physical and emotional demands of caregiving

Coping Strategies

- Avoid arguing "the truth"
- Respond to repeated questions with reassurance for the underlying emotion
- Redirect attention



- Identify restless pacing or hand wringing and engage in soothing activities
- Identify who you can share your feelings of grief, anger, loneliness
- Secure safety of the environment so you are not living on pins and needles
- Seek respite care

Common Challenges of Stage Three

- Significant physical care demands
- Clarifying your ability to provide the care needed
- Struggling with mixed feelings: relief, guilt, self or family criticism, loss
- Identifying alternative options for care that will be acceptable

Coping Strategies

- Connect with loved one through their senses such as a favorite meal, eye contact, hand holding, or soothing music
- Know and accept your limits
- Respect your needs and find ways to meet them
- Attend to your own physical health
- Seek respite care

Supports

Most importantly, look for more ways to remain connected to others. This may help you to avoid isolation and provide you the relief and support needed to offset the strain of caregiving.

- Your VA Caregiver Support Coordinator can give you information on local support groups in your area. You may also want to contact the Alzheimer's Association, Area Office of Aging, or the Caregiver Support Line for resources and supports locally.
- Visit with family, friends, and neighbors, with local church or community groups that may be available. If you can't visit in person, phone or write. Even a brief contact can brighten your outlook.