

6 Top Tips to deliver the best care for someone with dementia



Knowing that someone you care about has dementia, whatever stage of the illness, is very distressing for everyone involved. It may be up to you to care for them full-time or you may just want to treat them the best you can whilst you are with them, either way here are some top tips on how to be the best carer you can be for someone with dementia.

1. Do not underestimate them!

There will come a time where changes in their behaviour and capabilities become more obvious but do not purposely leave them out of any planning or preparation because you think it is best for them or you assume they are not capable. If they had a certain role during Christmas planning every year, let them still try to do it (or a smaller part of it). It may be that they cannot do it without assistance but allow them to participate and give some input. Acting in this way will also create some special memories that you and your family can cherish for life.

2. Find support groups near you

Dementia often exists with symptoms of depression which can be really hard to deal with. Support groups are there to help you and your loved one to cope with the difficulties and put less pressure on you as the carer. Support groups often arrange activities and days out which can be a great and positive change in routine. Here is a link to the Alzheimer's Society who support many different groups all over the country: <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/find-support-near-you>



3. Keep yourself in check!

Being a carer for someone with dementia full-time, part-time or occasionally is exhausting so it is extremely important that you keep an eye out for signs of exhaustion. If you are not well in yourself, how will you provide the best care? (This also applies to any other help you enlist from other family members or friends). Are you (or they) burnt out, stressed, demotivated, displaying signs of fatigue or foggy thinking? If so, it is best to take a break as in this state some accidents or mistakes can happen which could be disastrous. For example, if you are really tired and forget to close the door after putting out the rubbish and your loved one leaves and you have no idea where they are – this can have some very serious consequences, including making you feel more at fault than you should. In short, prioritise your own self-care because it will make you better at caring for others. In addition to this, just say no if you think things are getting too much. If becoming a carer is exhausting you and a friend would like you to help them with something, although you may love to do so, just say no if you do not think you have the time or energy to commit to it (but this does not mean that you should stop your own life, enlist help if it is overwhelming you and you can no longer maintain your own quality of life).

4. Maintain routine even at the hardest of times!

Being a good carer for someone with dementia involves creating routine in their life and the most important thing is that this routine is maintained. Around busy seasons, such as significant family events or Christmas, it may be hard to do this, but you must try your best (it is understandable at certain times it cannot be 100% on plan). It has been demonstrated in research how effective a routine is in caring for them. By disturbing this routine, you run the risk of them experiencing some mood changes, tiredness or some decline in their condition.

5. Remind yourself that you know best!

As the carer, you will be spending the most amount of time with your loved one so you will begin pick up on signs from distress or uneasiness to happiness and excitement. If you are in a situation, such as a crowded area, and you notice signs of distress, it is in the best interest of person you are caring for with dementia to leave. It is also important that you make a mental note of it to try and avoid it in the future. You may also notice that they are no longer comfortable at family parties surrounded by lots of people. Of course, this is a difficult one as you may like them to engage with the family but keep a close eye and if it is getting too much make other arrangements for them (for example to rest in a bedroom with a TV). Alternatively, if you notice that they are very happy doing a particular activity, encourage that to the max!

6. Refer to what carers are taught in training...

Mood swings are a common symptom and often present a struggle for the individual with ADHD and also those around them so it is key to try and manage this the best you can. This can be helped by making a few lifestyle changes such as adopting a healthier diet, getting enough sleep, exercising regularly and spending some time outdoors. These lifestyle changes have been shown to reduce ADHD symptoms like inattention, hyperactivity and distractibility. In addition to this, forms of meditation such as yoga, mindfulness and calming music can be very relaxing and relieve stress which can directly impact mood. Sleeping a sufficient amount can be a struggle but there are many articles and blogs available that suggest some holistic measures that help and are worth reading.