

Caregiver Assistance News

"Caring for You - Caring for Others"

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike,
Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

www.aaa7.org **Helping You Age Better!**



NOVEMBER 2011

Alzheimer's Disease and Difficult Behavior

In caring for someone with Alzheimer's disease (AD), some behaviors are more difficult to deal with than others. You must learn to cope with the behavior and keep yourself from burnout.

Your reaction depends on how you interpret the behavior. If you think of these behaviors as a way for the person with AD to communicate what they feel, or why they are upset, you'll be better able to respond calmly. Always take a moment to consider whether the person in your care is ill, in pain, tired, or otherwise uncomfortable. Then, ask yourself if you are asking too much of them.

Hoarding

Individuals with dementia are continuously losing parts of their lives—work, friends, family, and memories. This can make them hoard to "keep things safe." Hoarding can also be triggered by a fear of being robbed. An uncluttered home is the ideal environment. But, remember that safety and security are more important than perfection.

Build trust. Any changes you make to the home may cause a person with dementia to become very anxious.

Safety first. Check for fire hazards, fall hazards, and poisoning hazards. Keep things like cleaning fluids, plant soil,

lotions, and medicines out of reach. Regularly check the refrigerator to make sure that old food is tossed. Because some frail adults hold onto furniture while moving through the home, make sure that these supports are stable.

Minimize hiding places. Lock unused closets or doors. For persons who are still able to read, place signs that say "NO" or "STOP" where you don't want them to go. Learn where the person tends to hide things.

Limit valuables or cash within reach. Keep junk mail to a minimum. Arrange for bills to be sent to someone else for payment.

Remove nonessentials, like out-of-season clothing.

Understand coping mechanisms. Some people with dementia may keep belongings, including clothing, out in the open in order to know where they are. This may help them continue to function in the early or middle stages of the disease. They

may be willing to put their belongings away if large signs on drawers, such as "Shirts," help them find their possessions.

Fill a drawer with "odds and ends" for them to rummage through.

Check wastebaskets for "lost" items before they are emptied.

Keep duplicates of important items such as glasses, keys, etc.

Remove discarded items immediately. If you are removing items from the person's home, do so immediately. Otherwise, they may rummage through the garbage and bring them back into the house.



Cleaning Up Clutter

Discuss with the person in your care why the cleanout is needed (health dangers, eviction, etc.). Enlist their help and let them feel that they have some control over what is happening.

Go slowly. Even if you are only able to clear one small table or a corner of a room, the person's well-being and sense of control are more important than perfect cleanliness.

Source: Weill Medical College of Cornell University; New York Presbyterian; the University Hospital of Columbia and Cornell.

Screaming Fits

People with dementia often have a phase of screaming fits. First, ask a doctor to check for any physical reason for the screaming. Note if there is any pattern to the screaming, such as the timing; for example, around meal-times or other activities.

If no physical cause is found, it is probable that the person just feels bewildered. Try to keep calm and make them feel loved and supported. If the screaming persists, they may need a small amount of sedation from the doctor, as well as plenty of comfort from you. Usually, this distressing phase passes, and the sedation can be stopped.

Source: www.alzheimers.org.uk

Smoking Linked to Alzheimer's

Smoking more than two packs of cigarettes daily from ages 50 to 60 increases the risk of dementia later in life.

Source: WebMD Health News

November is National Alzheimer's Awareness Month

Alzheimer's Disease Facts

- 65% of Alzheimer's patients are women.
- 60% of Alzheimer's caregivers are women.
- One-third of all female caregivers care for somebody with Alzheimer's disease 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For more information about Alzheimer's, log on to www.alz.org.

The Alzheimer's Association has a 24/7 Help Line for information, referral and support:

Phone: 1.800.272.3900

TTY: 1.866.403.3073

E-Mail: info@alz.org

Good Manners - Holiday Visits

During the holidays, you might wonder if it really matters whether or not you visit someone with Alzheimer's disease, since the person will forget you were even there. While the visit may be forgotten almost immediately, the warm emotions created by the visit may linger long after you've left.



Want to learn more about home and community-based services and how we can help you? Contact the Area Agency on Aging today!

1-800-582-7277 • TTY: 711

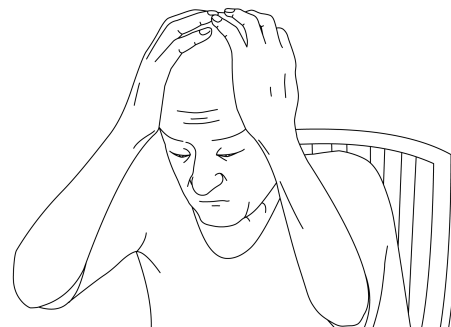
e-mail: info@aaa7.org • website: www.aaa7.org



Taking Care of Yourself - Caregiver Burnout Checklist

Ask yourself the following questions and seek professional help if you answer "Yes" to most questions.

1. What are your expectations? Are they realistic? Are you expecting the person with Alzheimer's to feel better or always be pleasant because of the time and concern you place toward their care?
2. Do you wish they would show gratitude?
3. When expected help does not come through, do you become disappointed and try to do everything yourself?
4. Are you feeling tired, isolated, helpless, angry, resentful, or guilty?
5. Are you physically ill yourself and not going to the doctor or following the doctor's instructions about how to care for yourself?
6. Have you stopped making time for yourself in order to refuel and nourish your own interests and friendships?
7. Are you using destructive ways of coping, such as alcohol, overeating, or misusing drugs?
8. Have you caught yourself calling the individual with Alzheimer's bad names?
9. Do you want to scream at them?
10. Are you afraid you may hurt them?



Live Life Laughing



"We are so grateful for the many things that did **not** happen today."

Don't Fall Be Safe

Be sure to have the proper snow shoes or boots when walking outside.





Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

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Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton.

Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the

Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a nurse or social worker who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs. The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at info@aaa7.org.

Reassure, Don't Argue

Memory loss and confusion may cause the person with Alzheimer's disease to perceive things in new, unusual ways. Individuals may become suspicious of others, even accusing them of theft or infidelity. The person may also misinterpret what he or she sees and hears. Remember these important tips:

- *Don't take offense. Listen to what is troubling the person, and try to understand that reality. Be reassuring, and let the person know you care.*
- *Don't argue or try to convince. Allow them to express ideas. Acknowledge their opinions.*
- *Don't correct everything, especially if it's not important or inconsequential.*
- *Offer a simple answer. Share your thoughts, but keep it simple. Don't overwhelm them with lengthy explanations.*
- *Switch the focus to another activity. Engage them in an activity, or ask them for help with a chore.*

Source: *The Comfort of Home for Alzheimer's Disease; Alzheimer's Association - www.alz.org*