



Learning to Live Well with an Alzheimer's or Dementia Diagnosis

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Finding out a loved one is living with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia can be overwhelming.

While currently there is no cure for Alzheimer's disease or other dementias, there are things that can be done to improve quality of life.

Acknowledge your feelings

It's normal for you or a family member to feel a range of emotions after a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease. These can include sadness, anger, fear, and guilt. Allow yourself to feel these emotions, but don't let them consume you. Learn about the disease and what a diagnosis means.

The more you know about the various stages of the disease, the better equipped you'll be to cope with it. Learning about Alzheimer's and other dementias can help with a lot of the unknowns that often come with a diagnosis.

Focus on the present moment

It's easy to get caught up in the future and worry about what might happen. Alzheimer's and other dementias progress at different speeds. An early diagnosis gives time to make small lifestyle changes that can help maintain quality of life. Create memories in the present you will cherish.

Find a support group

Remember, you're not alone. There are many people who are going through the same thing you are. There are resources available to help you, and you don't have to go through this alone.

Tips for Living Well with Dementia

Make goals and plans for the future

Living with dementia doesn't mean you can't plan ahead. Maybe it's time to travel and connect with old friends or take that dream fishing trip. Ticking off a bucket list can be a lot of fun.

Explore new hobbies and keep active

Hobbies and exercise are great ways to keep your brain active. Remember to share your knowledge and activities with family and friends, as passing on your skills is a positive experience that builds memories. Exercise is also important and will help keep your mind and body active.

Find strategies to help maintain independence

Examples of this include using reminders on a smartphone for important dates and medication reminders. Sticky notes are also great for labelling household items, or reminders of important numbers by the telephone.

Engage in clinical trials

Engaging in clinical trials can help individuals feel empowered by making a difference in the science and research behind future treatments and contributing to a future cure for Alzheimer's and other dementias.

Become an advocate

Supporting others in your community can give a sense of purpose and also build social connections. Organisations such as the Alzheimer's Society of Ireland have a number of ways you can get involved.

Debunking Myths

Adding to that stress, there are several myths surrounding the diagnosis that loved ones often hear.

MYTH 1

Life ends after a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or other dementias.

TRUTH

You can still find purpose and meaning.

MYTH 2

Having dementia means you'll end up in a facility or nursing home.

TRUTH

You can create a preferred safe and supportive environment in the comforts of home.

MYTH 3

Caring for someone with the disease will be impossible and overwhelming.

TRUTH

There are resources and support to help you along your caregiving journey.

More information about Alzheimer's and other dementias can be found in the resources area of our website.



Tips for Family Caregivers

There is a lot that families, caregivers and care partners can do to best support the individual living with the diagnosis. To debunk myth #2, a diagnosis does not necessarily mean a move to a facility or nursing home. There is a great deal that can be done to keep the person safe and comfortable at home.

Home safety

Creating and maintaining a safe environment is essential. Our website has several free resources to help bring you peace of mind.

Prioritise your own self-care

This sounds simple but often caregivers put their own needs on the back burner. It is important to take care of yourself so you can continue to care for the individual with the diagnosis. You may be in the caregiving role for an extended period of time.

Plan ahead for future care needs

Alzheimer's and other dementias are progressive diseases, which means they will likely get worse over time. The person living with the disease will become more dependent on help from others for things like paying bills, keeping up with household chores, driving, and personal care (bathing and dressing).

Be patient, understanding and respectful

Your loved one may not be able to do the things they used to do, and they may need your help with many things. Be patient and understanding, and try to see things from their perspective.

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