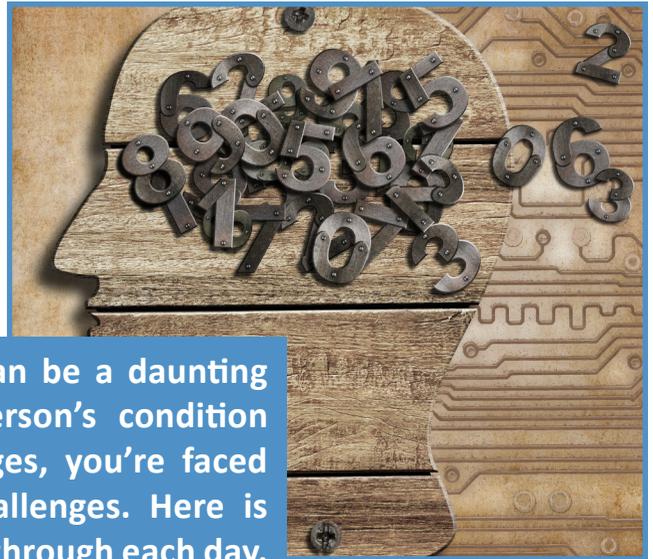


Caring for someone with Alzheimer's



Caring for someone with Alzheimer's can be a daunting and often distressing task. As the person's condition deteriorates and their behaviour changes, you're faced with new and increasingly difficult challenges. Here is some advice to help you to cope and get through each day.

Dealing with the diagnosis

The first hurdle to overcome is dealing with the news that your loved one has Alzheimer's. Your initial reaction will probably be shock and disbelief. But soon you may be faced with feelings of anger, fear, and uncertainty. It's important to learn as much as you can during this stage with resources such as doctors, Alzheimer's organisations, books, and support groups.

Tips to help someone with Alzheimer's

Communication

Alzheimer's can affect a person's ability to communicate so trying to get them to understand you can become difficult. To deal with this, ensure you have their attention before speaking, choose simple words and short sentences in a gentle, calm tone of voice, and minimise distractions and noise to help the person focus on what you are saying. Avoid talking to the person like a child or talking about them as if they are not there.

Stick to a routine

Make the day predictable and less confusing by scheduling routine tasks at the same time each day. Try to arrange challenging activities for the time of day when the person is at their most calm and well rested.

Let them help

Don't assume they are completely helpless and immediately take away all of their responsibilities.

When they can do things with little or no help, let them do so. Determine what tasks they are able to do, and if necessary, provide very clear steps or instructions for achieving the desired results.

Be patient

Realise that even the simplest task may take much longer than usual to complete, so don't rush your loved one.

Create a safe environment

Make sure all harmful chemicals and medications are locked up. Remove rugs, electrical cords, and anything else that could cause your loved one to trip and fall. Install secure locks on all windows and doors (particularly if they are prone to wandering) and remove locks from bathroom doors so they can't accidentally lock themselves in.

To cope, you'll have to learn as much as you can about the disease and what to expect as it progresses. You will also need to build a support system of people who can help when you feel overwhelmed. You can prepare yourself by developing strategies for dealing with difficult behaviours and situations and having a plan to get through the day. Try to remember that it's the Alzheimer's and not the person. Most people with the disease are aware of the changes taking place and it's very frightening.

Do your best to help them through this difficult time and don't forget to look after yourself, both physically and emotionally.