

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

Alzheimer's – Resistance to Care

In Alzheimer's disease (AD), when a person for whom you care seems to be refusing to cooperate with the activities of daily living such as dressing or bathing, you may think he is resisting care. Sometimes, when a person with Alzheimer's says “no” he may be *labeled* uncooperative.

People with AD may get upset when somebody touches them. You may be trying to do something to help him, but he doesn't understand what's going on. He may be feeling uncomfortable, powerless, frightened, tired, in pain, or confused. He cannot explain how he wants to be treated.

What to do? Try to put yourself in the shoes of the person with Alzheimer's disease and you may be able to avoid causing resistance. You may be able to change your approach to reduce these responses and actually be able to help the person to cooperate with you.

Tip

Think about what it would feel like to constantly be told to do something you may not feel like doing or cannot understand what is expected of you.

In order to provide good care you need to know how to respond to all the different ways in which the illness affects the person with dementia. This means that in many cases the person



shows you with actions what can no longer be communicated in words. So behaviors are more than behaviors. They are messages about ideas, feelings, and needs the person is telling you about in the best way he or she can.

Tip

The best thing you as caregiver can do is always ask yourself, “What is he trying to *say* by doing this?”

Gentle Reminders

In the early stage of Alzheimer's disease you may simply need to remind the person to attend to his personal care needs. Some people with AD lose their former high standard of personal hygiene. This can be upsetting to the people around them. Sometimes this is because of his memory problems. For example, he may go into the bathroom

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to take a shower, forget why he is there, come back out, and when asked, say that he has showered. Remember, he is not lying, but saying what he thinks he is supposed to say or believes to be true. He may have forgotten whether or not he has showered and even get annoyed that you are questioning him.

As always, don't argue. You can suggest later that he shower. As with all personal care activities, try to follow the person's usual routine. Follow the same routine day to

day. By knowing what to expect the person with dementia will be less likely to need to be told what to do and will have an internal sense of what is going to happen, giving him a sense of control. Most people are used to grooming in the early morning and then again late at night. If the person is able to do these tasks on his own, simply observe and make sure that the tasks are being done and not forgotten. These activities help provide a predictable structure for the day.

How Much Care to Give

A person in the *early stage*, and even later, may enjoy going to the beauty parlor or barber shop as he or she always has. However, you may need to make the appointment for her, and then make sure she knows when it is time to go. Generally people in the early stage can manage most aspects of personal care on their own and you may only need to keep a friendly eye out for slipups.

In the *middle stage* your involvement in personal care will increase considerably even if the person does not have another medical condition that leaves him frail and in need of assistance. People in the middle stage are more confused, cannot plan their activities or make such simple choices as what to wear and the order in which clothing needs to be put on. Bathing, dressing, eating, toileting, and mouth care are some of the activities of daily living that will require your assistance.

When helping a person with any activity, you will want to first give verbal instruction, then use visual gestures and finally, touch. It may be effective to combine a verbal cue with a gesture so that the person can get the information in more than one way. For instance, if you want the person to stand up, you can ask her to stand up, raise your hands up in a matching gesture and then if necessary touch her arm or leg to get her started. Only give as much help as is needed so that the person can remain as independent as possible. Offer encouraging words to show your appreciation for their efforts.

Taking Care of Yourself—Pet Therapy

Seniors often feel isolated whether living alone at home or in a facility. Human-Animal Interactions published a study of elderly dog owners revealing 75 percent of men and 67 percent of women considered their dog their only friend. Some studies have found that just a few minutes a day petting or visiting with an animal lowers the stress hormone of cortisol and increases the feel-good hormone of serotonin. The results can range from lowered heart rates and blood pressure to decreased depression. Pets can also benefit the caregivers. Caregiving can make you feel like you are all alone. While adding a pet to the list of loved ones you have to care for may seem like overload, having that happy face and wagging tail ready to give you some unconditional love when you return home can benefit caregivers as well. Studies have found that caregivers are twice as likely as the general public to develop chronic illness due to the prolonged stress of caring for a loved one. If having a pet can increase your exercise, lower your blood pressure and bring a smile to your face maybe having a pet is just what the doctor ordered.

Source: www.Alz.org Blog: How Caregivers Can Use Pet Therapy to Care for Their Loved Ones by Sherri Snelling



Live Life Laughing!

Where there's a will, I want to be in it.



Inspiration

Fear less, hope more. Eat less, chew more. Talk less, say more. Love more, and all good things will be yours.
~ Swedish proverb

Memory Care

Turn negatives into positives. Instead of saying, "Don't go there," try saying, "Let's go to the dining room."

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To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

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SAFETY TIPS— Alzheimer's – Bathroom Safety

A safe, comfortable home can help a person with Alzheimer's feel more relaxed and less overwhelmed. A few safety tips:

- ✓ Clear out or lock the medicine chest and the cabinet under the sink where poisonous substances have been kept.
- ✓ Use a cordless rechargeable electric razor. A safety razor should only be used with supervision.
- ✓ Control water temperature in the sink, tub, and shower to prevent accidental burns.
- ✓ Put screens over open drains.
- ✓ Have the toilet seat in a contrasting color to the floor.
- ✓ Remove locks on bathroom doors.

NEXT ISSUE... RECOGNIZE SKIN CHANGES