

10 Tips for Engaging Family Members as Positive Care-partners

WANT HELP? For details on how to deliver these and other useful approaches and to discuss professional development opportunities, contact sueswilson.7@gmail.com or call 512-799-5043.

Family members are a critical component of the care team, especially for individuals with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. But, knowing how to integrate family members into the overall care process is often daunting for both providers and families. Below are some ways that providers can help family members enhance the quality of life and satisfaction of residents like no one else!

1. Have family members construct their loved-one's "life story". Paper and pen, audio/visual recording or any combination will do and chapters can be added overtime. This can be a valuable experience for the entire family and a real treasure for the family. Plus, it will provide a wealth of information for truly person-centered care.
2. Educate family members on what changes to realistically expect from the dementia. This is important from Day 1 and throughout the course of the disease.
3. Assign a staff member to regularly inform family members on how their loved one is doing and to share the good experiences as well as updates on medical conditions. This is a great way to build and maintain positive relationships between family members and staff.
4. Help families bring JOY to their loved one. Families can build and maintain a small collection of items treasured by their loved one and then bring an item or two each time they visit ~ this can generate wonderful reminiscing. A staff member may need to show the family how to get memories started but once started the staff member can slowly disengage and let the family take over.
5. Show family members how to recognize those times when it is necessary to pause, step away, and breathe deeply if they are surprised or shocked by a new behavior. It is important to gain control of oneself before responding to the individual with dementia.
6. Educate family members on ways to approach their loved one and how to support and help maintain functional abilities throughout the course of the disease.
7. Educate family members on grief and the importance of grieving but ask them not to grieve in front of their loved one.
8. Encourage family members to get an MP3 player and comfortable headphones for their loved one and others in the facility. This is a great way to involve the younger family members in care and they can help grow the program in the care community.
9. Involve family members in writing and producing the facility newsletter.
10. Involve family members in developing and leading small group activities.

Sue S. Wilson, LMSW, CDP

360 Elder Solutions, LLC

www.360eldersolutions.com

512-799-5943 or Sueswilson.7@gmail.com