

Caring For Someone With Dementia

1. *Adapt your environment to be as non-distracting as possible.* Your loved one with dementia may constantly have television on in the background (if he's hard-of-hearing it may be more than background noise). Or sometimes the caregiver may be the one with the television or music on. Keep it down low or off altogether if it is agitating for him, or save it for when he's not in the room. Your loved one may lose some or all of his ability to filter out visual and auditory noise. This can be over-stimulating!
2. *Modify your pace:* take a deep breath and adjust your pace! No, wait! Take... a... deep... breath... and ... adjust... your... pace to that of the person you're helping. Hit the brakes and remind yourself this is your primary task for the moment. Give her time to find her words, complete her own sentences and as much of her task as she can on her own, before you jump in to help.
3. *Modify your tone:* it's an immediate indicator of your mood. Your loved one will pick-up on your tone even when they can't comprehend what you are saying.
4. *You'll never "win" an argument with someone who is confused or agitated.* An individual who is confused due to general dementia, stroke, Alzheimer's, etc. will not respond to logic or reason. It may also quickly lead to agitation so a positive way to respond to someone who is confused is not to reason with them ('Mom, you CANNOT drive anymore because it isn't safe!'). Instead, redirect them to a new topic ('Hey, Mom, can you tell me that funny story about Dad on your wedding day?').
5. *Create a daily schedule.* This offers structure and predictability for your loved one. In addition to medication and meal time, what are a few activities that can be integrated into your loved one's day? Watching a Cardinals game? Sitting outside in the warm sunshine while planning the grocery list together? Playing cards? Looking at old pictures/photo albums? Making a new "brag book" with updated pictures of all the grandkids? Get more use out of the schedule by referring to it throughout the day as a redirection tactic ('Ms. Jones, it looks like it's time to sit outside while I water your plants').
6. *Find opportunities to let your loved one make decisions.* Let them choose between two meal options, two outfits, or two magazines to read.



7. *Find opportunities to give your loved one control over their day.* Would you like to shower now or after breakfast? Do you prefer to take your medications before or after you brush your teeth? What color kitchen towels would you like me to pick-up for you?

8. *Adapt activities your loved one used to enjoy so they can still do them.* Arrange for their church to visit them at home, pick-up their favorite restaurant's food to-go, help host a Tupperware party with old friends, drive through Lone Elk Park and enjoy the scenery.

9. *Give yourself a break:* You've heard this before-and that's because it's one of the most important things you can do for yourself and your loved one! Home care can offer an occasional break as well as ongoing support.

10. *Know when you need help or when your loved one's needs exceed your abilities.* You can still be the primary caregiver, but building a team of support including other family members, friends, and home care caregivers, can help you feel less alone and overwhelmed. Your primary goal is to keep your loved one safe; at some point you may need part-time or full-time help to do so.

Thank you for downloading our guide! Call our dedicated Intake Nurse Jessica at 1-800-HOMECARE (in MO) and/or 1-618-HOMECARE (in IL), and schedule your free assessment today!