

# ALZHEIMER'S CAREGIVER TIPS

## 1. TO CONNECT WITH A PERSON WHO HAS ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE (AD):

- Make eye contact to get his or her attention.
- Call the person by name and encourage a two-way conversation for as long as possible.

## 2. TO ENCOURAGE THE PERSON WITH AD TO COMMUNICATE WITH YOU:

- Show a warm, loving, matter-of-fact manner, hold the person's hand while you talk, and take a "timeout" for yourself if you become frustrated.

## 3. TO SPEAK EFFECTIVELY WITH A PERSON WHO HAS AD:

- Speak slowly, use short phrases, and offer one-step instructions. For instance, say "Let's set the table" or "I need help folding clothes".
- Avoid beginning sentences with the word "Remember". It is ineffective and may cause feelings of failure or provoke an argument.
- Avoid asking yes or no questions. Instead of asking, suggest activities; say "It is time to..." rather than "do you want to...?"
- Use "Let's..." to encourage cooperation and participation
- Avoid giving commands or directives.

## 4. TO MANAGE BEHAVIOR CHANGES:

- Maintain a daily routine, so the person knows when certain things will happen. Use distractions such as music, singing, or other activities to distract the person.
- Ask for help from family, friends, or church groups to prevent caregiver burnout.

## 5. TO DEAL WITH SLEEP PROBLEMS – EVENINGS ARE HARD FOR MANY PEOPLE WITH AD. HERE ARE SOME TIPS THAT MAY HELP:

- Make sure the person gets exercise each day, limit naps, and make sure he or she gets enough daytime mental and physical activity. Try to maintain a consistent bedtime.
- Encourage calming bedtime rituals, such as soft music instead of TV
- Plan activities that require more energy early in the day. For example, try bathing in the morning or serving the largest family meal in the middle of the day.
- Limit caffeine.

## 6. TO COPE WITH AGITATION AND AGGRESSION – AGITATION MEANS THAT A PERSON IS RESTLESS, BORED, OR WORRIED. HERE ARE SUGGESTIONS TO HELP:

- Look for the early signs of agitation such as a raised voice, fidgeting, or repetitive behaviors.
- Speak to the emotion driving the agitation, typically fear. Say things like, "I am right here, "You are okay".
- Keep familiar, special items and photographs around the house. This can make the person feel more secure.
- Reduce noise, clutter, or the number of people in the room.
- Try gentle touching, soothing music, reading, or walks to promote a calm mood.
- Slow down and try to relax if you think your stress or fatigue may be affecting the person with AD.
- Find ways to take breaks from caregiving by asking for help, utilizing a respite facility for a few days, or hiring an in-home caregiver.

