



Accepting Change in Life as a Caregiver and When Living with Dementia

Have you ever heard the quote, "The only constant in life is change" by Greek philosopher Heraclitus?

Everything in life is ever-changing, and this rings particularly true when dementia is involved. Depending on which one(s) of the 100+ types of dementia a person is living with, the progression can be gradual, step-by-step, or even sudden in the case of an acute life-changing event. Whether you're supporting a person living with Alzheimer, Frontotemporal, Lewy Body, or Vascular Dementia, change is inevitable. And the truth is - change is hard, and can impact your mental health.

Dr. Sridhar Pillay, and assistant professor of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School share, "When you change, it actually activates the conflict sensors in the brain and this causes brain chaos that is called cognitive dissonance. This activation of the conflict sensor becomes stressful to people.

So what can you do to help reduce these stressors, and make it more likely to accept the changes so that you can move forward under the new set of conditions?

Here are some ideas to help ease feeling of distress during times of change.

- **Redirect uncertainty** - Use neutral self-talk phrases. As an example, telling yourself a phrase like, "Uncertainty simply means I don't know the future, but that doesn't mean the future is bad", can help you calm your nerves a bit.

Another way to fight stress caused by uncertainty is to draft a plan. Organizing your thoughts with pen and paper can help ease tense nerves, as it help unload your brain of some of its constantly swirling thoughts.

But, as with anything related to dementia, be sure to remind yourself that this plan is flexible. Try to go with

the flow as much as possible.

- **Be conscious and mindful of your actions** - Acknowledge the way you feel and express it, so you make room for a little more positivity. Becoming aware and conscious of the effects your own actions have on you allows you to guide your behaviors toward a more positive trajectory. As an example, as you engage in the manual tasks of getting ready in the morning, do you spend that time dwelling on the negatives of the situation? What would happen if instead you turned on some upbeat music, and maybe even dared to dance along with it a little? Exercise in small doses, can act as a serious mood-booster.

By putting yourself into a more positive frame of mind, not only are you calming yourself, but you're also opening the door to seeing things from a more positive perspective.

- **Focus on gratitude** - While it may not be immediately obvious during challenging times, most of us still have things to be thankful for, and recognizing and acknowledging these can have a significant positive impact on our lives.

- **Enjoy the present moment, the now** - Do you often find yourself ruminating about the past, or worrying about the future? While these are common thought patterns, can you still change the past? Likely, you answered no. And, while you can plan and try to prepare for the future, life has its way of throwing in the unexpected. Endlessly worrying about what's ahead has a good chance of robbing you of the joys of the present moment.

It is very common for dementia care partners to experience anticipatory grief, feelings of anxiety over the future loss of abilities or the person as a whole. Yet, worrying about what may one day be, can cloud your vision of what is today.

Most importantly give yourself time. Don't be hard on yourself if accepting this change takes longer than you may like.

Source: Valerie Feurich - Teepah Snow - Positive Approach to Care



Providing Services for Older Adults and Their Caregivers
You have options - you choose the services that best fit your needs.

- Caregiver Support Program to help ease some of the stress caregivers face every day.
- Respite Care, Personal Care and Homemaking
- Medical Transportation
- Personal Emergency Response Systems
- Adaptive equipment such as shower chairs, and transfer benches.

To begin receiving services, call the **Aging Services Office at 740-681-5050.**

How to Get Someone with Dementia to Take Their Medication

Getting someone with Alzheimer's disease to take their medicine can be an ongoing challenge for many caregivers. Refusing to take medication could be a response to being confused or feeling afraid of what they're being asked to do. Your older adult might also feel like they don't have any control over their life, which could make them generally angry or resistant.

- **Start with a calm environment.** Make sure there aren't any loud sounds like TV or commotion like lots of people around. You could also try playing soft, soothing music. Before you start, take some deep breaths and do your best to stay calm throughout the process. If you're agitated, frustrated, or angry, it's likely they'll be able to sense it and that can cause them to become agitated and less likely to cooperate.

- **Be alert to side effects or illness that make them feel sick or uncomfortable.** Someone might refuse to take their medicine if it makes them feel sick, uncomfortable, or if they have an illness. Many medications cause unpleasant side effects like nausea, stomach aches, agitation, or dizziness and your older adult might not be able to tell you that there's a problem.

- **Make pills easier to take.** Some pills could be too large and hard to swallow. Talk with your older adult's doctor or pharmacist to see if any of their medications could be changed to a liquid formula or if you could crush the pills and add them to applesauce, yogurt, or food. Make sure to ask before crushing any pills because not all pills are crushable. Some can become less effective or even unsafe.

- **Use short sentences and don't explain or reason.** Don't get into a conversation about why they need the medication or explain why it's important that they need to take their pills. Reasoning with someone with dementia simply doesn't work. Instead use short, direct sentences.

- **Look for things that trigger distress.** Sometimes other things about taking medication can upset someone with Alzheimer's or dementia.

For example, they could feel distressed when they see a lot of pill bottles. In that situation, you could keep their medication bottles out of sight and only bring out the pills they need to take at that moment.

Similarly, if seeing all the pills they need to take makes them anxious, you could give them only one pill at a time and keep the rest out of sight.

- **Find the right time of day.** People with dementia often have "good" and "bad" times of day. Trying to give medicine during one of their bad times isn't likely to work. For example, if your older adult typically gets sun-downing symptoms, avoid giving medication in the late afternoon or evening unless the doctor absolutely requires it for an important medical reason.

Think about the times of day when they're in the best moods and adjust their medication schedule to meet those times. Of course, before making any changes to their medication schedule, talk with their doctor to make sure the new schedule you'd like to use is safe and won't cause any problems.

- **Stick to a daily routine.** A daily routine can do wonders for someone with dementia. With a regular schedule for taking medication, your older adult will likely get used to it and become more cooperative over time. Give them their pills at the same time every day. Do it in the same place, like when they're relaxing in their favorite chair, and use the same cup for water.

Source: DailyCaring.com

Opportunity for Caregivers to Share and Learn

presented by the



Central Ohio Chapter

Wednesday, January 22

2:00-3:00pm

Fairfield County

Alzheimer's

Caregiver Support Group

Held in Meals on Wheels' Library

The goal is to provide a consistent and caring place for caregivers to learn, share and gain emotional support from others who are also on the unique journey of caring for someone living with Alzheimer's disease or another dementia.

To register, please call Sheila at
The Senior Hub-Meals on Wheels
740-681-5050, ext. 119

Walk-In Hours at Meals on Wheels

Have your questions about caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's answered by

Lindsay Blackburn

Alzheimer's Association - Central Ohio Chapter

January 29, 11am-1pm