

Caring for Someone with Dementia: 5 Ways to Prepare

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Helpful resources make dementia care easier

Caring for someone with dementia doesn't come naturally and isn't easy. There are unfamiliar behaviors to manage, big decisions to make, and lots of emotions to work through.

That's why it's essential to learn tried-and-true care techniques, find resources to help prepare, and identify sources of support. This helps both you and your older adult.

We found great advice for dementia caregivers in an [article at Next Avenue](#). They share 5 helpful tips to help you prepare to care for someone with Alzheimer's or dementia.

We highlight the article's most useful tips below. Even if you've already been a caregiver for a while, this advice can make life a little easier.

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5 ways to prepare for caring for someone with dementia

1. Seeking and understanding a dementia diagnosis

When you notice that your older adult is experiencing dementia-like symptoms, an important first step is to get a [proper diagnosis](#) and [understand what it means](#).

This may not be easy to do because many doctors are not experienced in dementia care. But it's worthwhile to be persistent, find specialists as needed, and learn as much as possible.

Knowing that your older adult has [dementia](#) and not a [treatable condition with similar symptoms](#) means that you can seek out helpful resources, find out [what to expect](#), [plan for the future](#), and find out how to handle [challenging dementia behaviors](#).

2. A care partner mindset

Depending on how advanced the dementia is, you may be able to think of yourself as a care "partner" rather than a care "giver." Of course, this will be different depending on the situation, so do what works best for your situation.

The reason for thinking of yourself as a partner is to help remember that the person with dementia is impaired, but still present. Their skills and knowledge may come and go, but they're still able to engage with the world. Dismissing someone as "senile" typically leads them to shut down.

Once there's a dementia diagnosis (or the symptoms are very clear and not caused by a treatable condition), work with your older adult as much as possible to create an action plan.

Recommended conversation topics include:

- Managing finances
- Access to checkbooks and credit cards
- Legal planning
- Driving
- Advance directive
- End-of-life wishes

3. Learn simple interaction techniques

Learning more about dementia, how it progresses, and new communication techniques will help you care for your older adult. This knowledge improves quality of life for both of you and is especially helpful when challenging behaviors start happening.

Simple, meaningful things that help you connect with your older adult include:

- Eliminating background noise whenever possible
- Maintaining eye contact
- Speaking in a slow, calm manner
- Playing soft music
- Looking at photo albums together
- Recognizing the power of touch

Other helpful resources include:

- Our True Colors: A Family's Journey with Dementia – a mother and daughter who share what they've learned about dementia through caring for their husband and father
- Dementia Alliance International – a collaboration of like-minded individuals diagnosed with dementia who promote education and awareness about dementia to improve the quality of the lives of people with dementia

4. Social ties are important

A big challenge that's essential to deal with is maintaining social connections.

It's common that people stop visiting when they find out someone has dementia. Often, this is because they don't understand dementia and don't know what to do. To combat this, do your best to speak with family, friends, neighbors to explain the disease and let them know how they can help.

And even though it may be tough, don't let fears of how people may perceive your older adult and you stop you from going out – to religious services, running errands, getting a haircut, medical appointments, etc. This eliminates potential sources of support for both of you.

A helpful resource is [Dementia Friendly America \(DFA\)](#). They're a collaboration of nearly 30 organizations, including n4a, DAA, and ACT on Alzheimer's. They work with local governments, transit systems, businesses, and health care systems to make communities more welcoming to those with dementia.

Another good resource is [Dementia Mentors](#). They're an innovative international project that matches a person newly diagnosed with someone of a similar background, anywhere in the world, who's been living with the disease.

5. Consider support groups

Meeting other people who are going through similar experiences is invaluable. Listening to others' stories, hearing about what's helped them, and supporting each other through emotional ups and downs is a big help and a comfort.

[Online support groups](#) are helpful for those who can't easily leave the house and can provide support anytime, 24/7. Of course, it's always important to be safe online and protect your personal information.

And though you may feel [guilty](#) about caring for yourself, remember this advice from [Family Caregiver Alliance](#): "Only when we first help ourselves can we effectively help others. Caring for yourself is one of the most important – and one of the most often forgotten – things you can do...."

Next Step [Get more tips on how to prepare for caring for someone with dementia in the full article at Next Avenue](#)

Recommended for you:

- [5 Tips for Dealing with Caregiver Guilt in Dementia Care](#)
- [3 Stages of Dementia: What to Expect](#)
- [4 Reasons Dementia Activities Are Important and 5 Ways to Adapt Everyday Tasks](#)

By DailyCaring Editorial Team

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