Vitality

EDUCATIONAL SERVICES LLC

EDUCATE
SUPPORT
EMPOWER

FAMILY GUIDE

Caring for Someone Living with *Dementia*

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE.
REAL SUPPORT.
BRIGHTER DAYS.

A campassionate guide for families and caregivers to better understand dementia, navigate challenges, and create meaningful moments every day.



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UNDERSTANDING Dementia

More than memory loss... a different way of experiencing the world.

Dementia is an umbrella term for a group of conditions that affect memory, thinking, behavior, and the ability to perform everyday activities. It is not a normal part of aging, but it does become more common as people get older.

COMMON TYPES

- **Alzheimer's disease** – most common
- **Vascular dementia** – often related to blood flow problems in the brain
- **Lewy body dementia** – can affect movement, sleep, and behavior
- **Frontotemporal dementia** – often causes changes in behavior, language, and personality
- **Mixed dementia** – a combination of types

EARLY SIGNS MAY INCLUDE

- Trouble remembering recent events
- Difficulty with problem solving or planning
- Changes in mood or behavior
- Confusion about time or place
- Withdrawal from activities or social situations
- Repeating questions or stories

COMMUNICATION *Tips that Help*

As dementia progresses, it may be harder for your loved one to find the right words or understand what is being said. The goal is to communicate with patience, respect, and a calm approach.

BE PATIENT

- ✓ Allow extra time for responses.
- ✓ Give them time to express themselves in their own words.
- ✓ Avoid rushing or finishing their sentences.

LISTEN WITH YOUR HEART

- ✓ Maintain eye contact.
- ✓ Use a calm and reassuring tone.
- ✓ Focus on their feelings, not just the words.
- ✓ Validate their emotions.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

- Use clear, short sentences.
- Ask one question at a time.
- Give simple choices instead of open-ended questions.
- Use familiar words and topics.

USE POSITIVE LANGUAGE

- Offer encouragement and reassurance.
- Avoid correcting or arguing.
- Redirect gently if they are confused or upset.
- Focus on what they can do.

Helpful Phrases to Try

- ✓ "Let's do this together."
- ✓ "You're safe. I'm here with you."
- ✓ "That sounds frustrating. I'm here to help."
- ✓ "Would you like this or this?"
- ✓ "Let's take one step at a time."
- ✓ "You're doing a great job."
- ✓ "I'm so glad you're here."

EVERYDAY CARE AND SAFETY

Strategies to support independence and create a safer environment.

AT HOME

- Keep a consistent daily routine.
- Use visual cues and labels.
- Reduce clutter and tripping hazards.
- Ensure good lighting.
- Keep frequently used items within reach.
- Consider door alarms or safety locks if wandering is a concern.

EVERYDAY LIVING

- Encourage familiar activities and hobbies.
- Break tasks into simple steps.
- Use calendars, clocks, or reminders.
- Support nutrition and hydration.
- Attend medical appointments and keep a list of questions.
- Be flexible and adapt as needs change.

SAFETY REMINDERS

- ✔ Monitor for changes in behavior or confusion, which may indicate a medical issue such as a urinary tract infection, dehydration, or medication side effect.
- ✔ Keep emergency contacts easily accessible.
- ✔ Consider a medical alert bracelet for wandering risk.
- ✔ Discuss advance care planning early.

TAKING CARE OF YOU

Caregiver well-being is important, too.

Caring for someone with dementia can be rewarding, but it can also be demanding. Taking care of yourself helps you provide the best support for your loved one.

- Take breaks and use respite care when available.
- Ask for help from family, friends, or community resources.
- Join a support group to connect with others who understand.
- Maintain your own medical appointments and healthy habits.
- Give yourself grace – you are doing an important job.



HELPFUL RESOURCES

Local and national support, education, and next steps.

NATIONAL RESOURCES

Alzheimer's Association
24/7 Helpline: 1-800-272-3900
www.alz.org

National Institute on Aging
1-800-222-2225
www.nia.nih.gov

CAREGIVER SUPPORT

Family Caregiver Alliance
1-800-445-8106
www.caregiver.org

Eldercare Locator
1-800-677-1116
www.eldercare.acl.gov

LOCAL SUPPORT (NC)

North Carolina Area Agencies on Aging (AAA)
1-855-462-5465
www.ncdhhs.gov/aging

NC Division of Aging and Adult Services
www.ncdhhs.gov/aging

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