



SENIOR SERVICES
Helping Our Elderly Live With Dignity

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WILLIAMS ADULT
DAY CENTER

MEALS-ON-WHEELS

HELP LINE

HOME CARE

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ELDER CARE CHOICES

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The PERSON with Alzheimer's Disease or Related Dementia

A PERSON with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia can still be involved in life. They may have hidden talents yet to be discovered that your loved one may not have realized before the illness. Take pleasure in helping them still enjoy things instead of mourning the things they've lost. Help them maintain confidence in themselves, encouraging them to do as much as they can for themselves as long as possible.

Daily activity that your loved one enjoys can help bring purpose and meaning to their life. Meaningful activities help the person feel that they are still productive and making a contribution, gives a sense of control, and fills a need. Help your loved one be creative, and provide outlets for self-expression such as music or art. Activities may be related to past interests and skills, but they may need to be encouraged to still pursue some of those special interests and hobbies. Utilize their current skills instead of introducing new ones. Exercise patience in helping your loved one get started. Break the activity down into several smaller tasks. Otherwise, the task may seem too overwhelming, and they will get frustrated. If your loved one does get agitated, distract their attention to something else. Remember, the goal is not the end product.

Assess the person's skills including cognitive abilities, attention span, judgment, and language abilities, and realize the illness causes changes. Some people are doers, others would rather watch. Still others would rather make witty comments as they share laughter. Always allow them the freedom to be themselves.

Use words and visuals to cue old memories. Reminisce with your loved one by sharing memories and old photos. People with dementia can often still remember people and events from long ago. It's their short-term memory that is affected.

People with dementia have lost some cognitive ability, but they have abilities left. Often they can work around the things they can no longer do. Build on their strengths rather than deficits, recognizing that the strengths may change over time.

Good communication skills with the person with dementia creates a better quality of life for them and for you. Learning to see the changing behavior and abilities as part of the illness and not as something the person is intentionally doing can help lower stress experienced by the caregiver and allow for more compassion. Always remember, the disease is not the focus. The person should be the focus. Your loved one is a PERSON with dementia. Always preserve their dignity, treat them with utmost respect, and keep your sense of humor.

This information is provided to the consumer by Senior Services' Help Line (724-2040), a hub of the Forsyth County Community Resource Connection. 2/2010