

# TIPS FOR CAREGIVERS NEW TO DEMENTIA



## From the Desk of Jaime Goddard-Stern, BSN

Wanting to take care of a loved one living with dementia is commendable, however it does come with its challenges. With any lifestyle change, some challenges and difficulties may be expected. You try to prepare yourself for what is to come. Caring for someone with dementia is extremely hard to prepare for. Dementia is a very difficult disease to understand, and it is very unpredictable. For instance, preparing yourself to run a marathon takes lots of conditioning and dedication, but you eventually do it.

Some caregivers do not have time to prepare themselves mentally or physically to take care of their loved one with dementia. For whatever reason, they have been thrust into this situation without warning or have stepped up to the challenge. So, now what? Follow these tips and advice to be better equipped to handle this life-changing transition.

### Tips for Caregivers New to Dementia

**Take care of yourself!** This is extremely important. You must stay healthy to take care of your loved one. Even if it is only a few minutes a day, take the time!

**Find a support group near you.** Know you are not alone. It is extremely helpful to seek advice from those that have been through the caregiver experience.

**Accept offers to help.** If someone offers their time to help you, let them. Let them go to the grocery store for you or sit with your loved one for a couple hours. If you don't, the offers will stop coming.

**Have patience.** Patience is a virtue. Dementia will challenge you in ways you can't imagine. Allow extra time for daily tasks. This will save you a lot of frustration and headaches.

**Do not argue.** Keep in mind that you are arguing with dementia and not your loved one. Allow yourself to enter their reality instead of forcing them into yours. If they say, "It's raining outside but the sun is shining bright", reply with, "Well, we better grab the umbrella." Arguing will only lead to frustration on both sides and trigger unwanted behaviors.

Caring for someone living with dementia or Alzheimer's disease is a journey, requiring a great deal of patience and often additional help. Take a deep breath and prepare as needed. Caregivers have a positive impact by keeping a loved one's dignity intact and giving them purpose in this time of need.



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