

How to Help Loved Ones with Dementia Cope During COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting social isolation present unique challenges for more than five million Americans living with Alzheimer's disease and their caregivers.

Here are a few tips to help cope through the health crisis:

Keep up a routine: If your loved one was attending a day program that has closed and is now at home with you, it would be helpful to have a structured day with planned activities. Can your loved one assist with a favorite household routine like sorting groceries, organizing coupons or putting away laundry? There are other opportunities for engagement: Dance to favorite music, read a short story or make cards to send to a loved one.

Practice Self-Care: Make your home your sanctuary. Take time to practice things that make you feel good and less anxious. Turn off the news if it seems distracting. Practice taking short breaks to stretch and breathe. Take a walk outside with your loved one. Nourish your body with a balanced diet and your mind with positive self-talk. Remember what you enjoy doing.

Coping with Stress and Anxiety: Your loved one may experience a heightened sense of stress being home bound more than usual. They may have a more difficult time expressing what they are feeling and become more agitated. If you observe more agitation, do something with them that is familiar. Play music, look through photo albums, play a game. Let them know that they are safe and you are there to help. A soothing touch, brushing their hair or a hug may bring calm and reduce agitation. Check to see what may be triggering the agitation and make changes where needed.

Addressing Spiritual Needs: Like you, your loved one may have a desire to still be spiritual while home bound. Involve them in activities that remind them of their spiritual connection. It could be saying a prayer together, singing their favorite worship song or reading from their worship book or guide. Connecting to their spiritual needs can help them find meaning and serenity in challenging times.

Stay Connected: You may find it harder to stay connected while homebound. Use technology to help stay connected to loved ones and much-needed resources. With caregiver support groups cancelled and visitations to nursing homes limited, try a video call with your loved one to bring a smile to their face. Schedule a virtual date to share stories or even home projects.

Caregivers of people with memory loss such as Alzheimer's, dementia or a related disorder can call [Care2Caregivers](#), operated by Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care at 800-424-2494 for peer support, resources, education, referrals, coaching, tips on coping and help negotiating community resources. Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.