



Basic Principles For Caring For Those With Dementia

Please stay connected in whatever way possible, in person, by post, by phone or internet. Please keep positive! Keep to the facts. No speculation, just constant reassurance that they are being looked after, still loved and cared for, nothing has changed there. It can be frightening for someone living with dementia if routines suddenly change, and these should be kept as steady as possible. Patterns should continue and give confidence.

Those in the **early stages** may appear to be doing well but can become confused and make decisions that are not appropriate, as facts are forgotten. Keep a watchful eye. They may also be more concerned, as more aware of possibilities. As always reassure, and be willing to repeat things more often.

Those in **middle stages** will be picking up that something is afoot and be watching TV news. If possible try and ensure they watch other programs such as nature, old films, familiar subjects, comedy and travel. Again remember the feelings that are being communicated. We can still share joy and laughter. Familiar music and singing can calm.

Those in **later stages** will be less aware of the outside world but they will be very aware of the emotions of their carers. Remember: *feelings remain when facts are forgotten*. We mirror other people's emotions, so please remain calm and appear confident and smile!

Social Contact

Visit healthy individuals for as long as possible. Stay away if unwell oneself. Always wash one's hands. Many care homes are closing their doors to outside visitors and the time may come when there is self-isolation.

Those living by themselves can become isolated, can become afraid, lonely, confused and their only contact may be 'deliveries'. Constant reassurance is necessary, that they are not forgotten, still cared for and loved.

Activities should continue: music in all its forms, painting & puzzles. If in lock down: Phone calls, letters, cards, emails, things left outside their door, flowers, prayers, Skype or FaceTime if able, as familiar faces are important. Meals can be delivered as there is no evidence the virus is transmitted in food.

Spiritual Encouragement

This is so very important to many older people. They can be reassured by peaceful pictures and familiar scripture verses, such as the Lord's prayer and Psalm 23. They need to be reassured God still loves them, they are not forsaken. *I am the Lord your God who holds your hand and will help you. Isaiah 41:13*
We live in a broken world, fear is destructive, but nothing takes God by surprise and He walks with us.

New opportunities to commend ourselves: from 2 Corinthians 6:

*in troubles, hardships, & distress....
understanding, patience and kindness;
in love in truthful speech & the power of God;*

Understanding - Always a reason for whatever we do or say

Patience - Be willing to repeat things more frequently

Kindness - Acts of simple kindness can still continue

Truthful speech: be positive - spring is coming, the sun is shining!

*Dr Jennifer Bute is a retired GP, diagnosed with dementia aged 63. She is a campaigner and regular speaker at events. Through her Christian faith she sees dementia as a Glorious Opportunity while acknowledging the challenges it brings. Jennifer is able to provide a doctor's perspective on dementia, while experiencing it from the inside.
www.gloriousopportunity.org*