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Dementia: Tips for Daily Life

Coping skills will help you handle day-to-day challenges, maximize your independence and live a meaningful life with your diagnosis.

Accepting changes

Things you once did easily will become increasingly difficult, such as maintaining a schedule or managing money. Some people may try to cover up their difficulties to protect themselves and their family from embarrassment. Or, they may be reluctant to ask for help. Trying to do what others in the early stage have called "faking it" and covering up errors can be a great source of stress. Accepting changes in your abilities and adapting new coping skills can help you restore balance to your life and give you a sense of accomplishment in your abilities as you continue to live with the disease.

Developing effective coping strategies can help you:

- Remain engaged and active
- Respond to challenges that will help maximize your independence and well-being
- Gain a sense of control over your life

Keep in mind that what works well for one person, may not work for another. And, strategies that work for you one day, may not work the next. When developing your coping strategies, try different ones to find those that work best for you. The more flexible you can be, the better you can fine-tune your strategies to help with each situation.

Creating a coping strategy

Develop strategies to help you live day by day.

You may already be aware of changes in your ability to complete daily tasks that once came naturally to you. Developing your own coping strategies doesn't have to be complicated. You can simplify the process by focusing on these three steps:

1. Identify: Make a list of tasks that have become more challenging.

Focus on developing coping strategies for your more challenging tasks. For example, if you are forgetting to take your medications, but have no problem remembering to do the laundry, focus on creating medication reminder strategies first.

2. Prioritize: Determine if the task is necessary.

Ask yourself if the task you are trying to accomplish will help you get to your goal. For example, if paying bills has become more difficult for you, can someone help you write out each check? If the answer is yes, consider asking someone to help. You can remain in charge of signing each check.

3. Strategize: Find the solution that works best for you.

For example, if you are having difficulty cooking dinner, try simplifying the process by using a crockpot. You can make a full meal without spending a lot of time figuring out the cooking process.

Tips for daily living

- **Set realistic goals and focus on what you can do today.** Set realistic expectations for yourself and use the skills you have to be successful in dealing with challenging tasks. Some tasks may become too difficult for you to complete even with reminder aids. Reduce stress by asking family or friends for help, if needed.
- **Develop a daily routine.** Make a daily plan to keep track of the few tasks you want to accomplish each day. Having a schedule can reduce the time you spend figuring out what needs to be done and when, and makes you more successful in accomplishing your goals and limiting mistakes.
- **Approach one task at a time and don't get stuck.** Give yourself enough time to complete a task. Don't pressure yourself to succeed. If something

becomes too difficult, take a break and try again later. Spending time to change something you cannot control can be a waste of energy and can prevent you from focusing your attention on what you can control.

- **Know that you have more than one chance to solve most problems.** It's not uncommon to have to try different strategies to achieve your overall goal. Assess what could have been done differently and make adjustments as needed.
- **Recognize the triggers that cause you stress.** What are the triggers that cause you anxiety, worry or stress? For example, if others are hurrying you, explain what you are trying to accomplish and ask that they provide you the time needed to be successful. Knowing what causes stress allows you to make plans in advance or decisions about the type of activities/tasks you choose to participate in.
- **Use your sources of strength.** Family, friends, prayer, your inner strength, pets — all these sources can get you through hard times, even as you face daily challenges or setbacks.
- **Get more tips on our message boards.** [Join ALZConnected](#), our online community, where others living with Alzheimer's share their tips, experiences and support.

Accepting help from others

A common concern among individuals living in the early stage of Alzheimer's is loss of independence. You may feel that by asking others for help, you will lose your sense of self or become dependent. While it may seem like a sign of weakness at first, asking for help when you need it may help you maintain your independence and remain in control.

Learn more: [Building a Care Team](#)

Advice from others living with Alzheimer's

The [Alzheimer's Association National Early-Stage Advisors](#), and other individuals living with the disease, share their personal insights about the daily strategies they use to address such challenges as managing schedules, taking medications, dealing with changes in relationships and overcoming stigma. Their experiences can help you to think creatively as you develop your own strategies for living with the disease. See a full list of these [helpful coping tips](#) (PDF).

Coping strategies from people living with Alzheimer's

| Daily Challenge | Coping Strategy |
|--|---|
| Remembering which medications I have taken | "I place a yellow sticky note onto a particular medication saying "Do not take me" as a reminder that the medication has already been taken." |
| Locating my spouse in a crowded area | "I wear the same color shirt as my spouse when going out in public. If I become anxious in a crowd and can't find her, I simply look down at the color of my shirt to help me remember what she was wearing." |
| Forgetting whether or not I have washed my hair when showering | "I move the shampoo and conditioner bottles from one side of the shower to the other once I have completed washing my hair so that I know that I have completed the task." |
| Difficulty writing | "My care partner assists me by writing out the checks and then I sign them." |
| Friends shying away from me | "Understandable and not uncommon; your best and real friends will stay with you, in thick and thin. That's where you need to invest your time and energy." |
| Accepting changes in abilities | "Don't stress. Recognize that some things may become more difficult for you to do. Try to accept that these changes are out of your control and focus on the things you can still do." |

The **Alzheimer's Association** is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

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