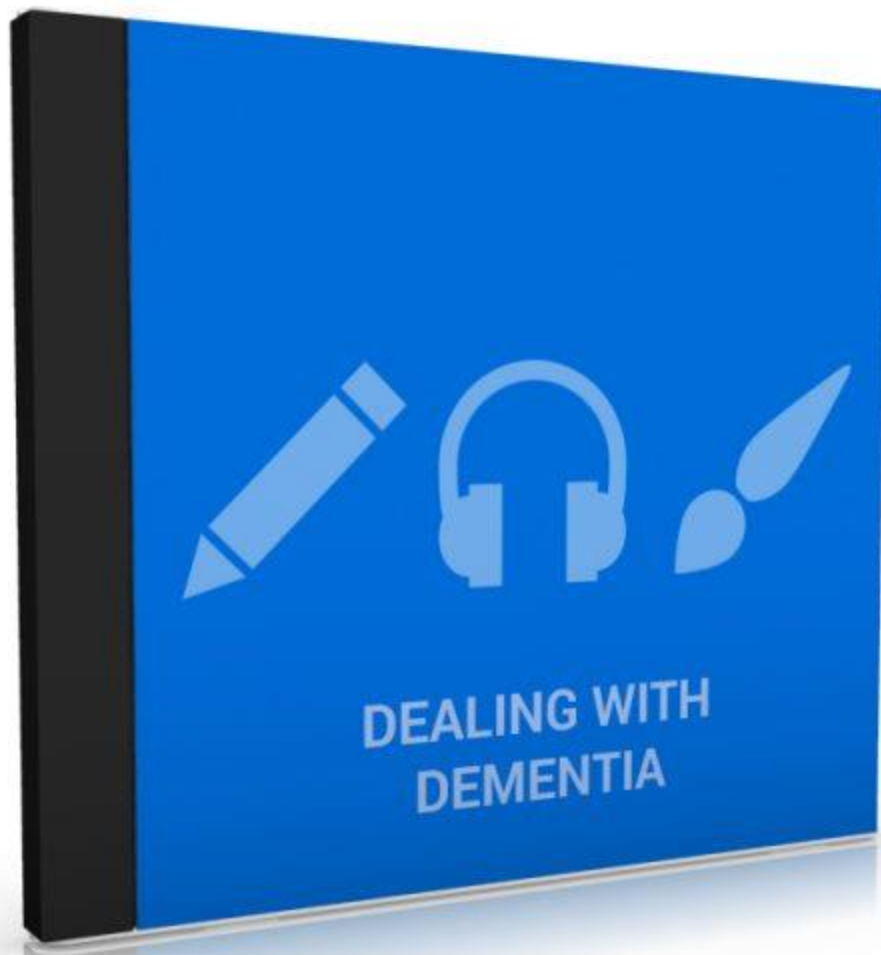


# Dealing With Dementia



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# 7 Natural Alzheimer's Treatments and Tips

The cognitive decline that comes with the many diseases under the dementia umbrella can be treated. In some cases, depending on the condition and its progression, the mental difficulties dementia causes can be reversed. While there are traditional medical treatments for Alzheimer's, vascular dementia and other forms of dementia, they often involve unfortunate side-effects. As alternative and complementary treatment methods, the following 7 natural oils, herbs, vitamins, and spices are showing promise.

## **1 – Coconut Oil**

Ketones are brain-boosting compounds found in coconut oil. Coconut oil also contains "good fats" that improve how the brain communicates with the rest of the body. Doctor Bruce Fife is an author of 20 books, some of which deal with the incredible benefits of coconut oil for treating and preventing Alzheimer's disease. He is one of just several mental health professionals that have noticed dramatic improvement in Alzheimer's patients when coconut oil is taken daily.

## **2 – Ashwagandha**

This perennial evergreen is an herb commonly found in aromatherapy. It has been used to treat mental disorders and physical health problems for thousands of years in the age-old Indian practice of Ayurvedic medicine.

### **3 – Turmeric**

Curcumin is the active ingredient in turmeric. Present in several natural healing practices which date back thousands of years, curcumin has antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties which have a positive influence on Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia.

### **4 – Fish Oil, Omega-3 Supplements**

To benefit from this natural Alzheimer's treatment, eat 2 to 4 servings of fish every week. You can alternately take an omega-3 supplement each day. Cod liver oil is a safe and natural alternative suggestion to get health-boosting essential fatty acids into your body where they can go to work treating Alzheimer's symptoms.

### **5 – Probiotics**

One of the easiest ways to prevent and treat a number of mental and physical health conditions is to keep your gut healthy and happy. Digestive problems have a link to as many as 75% of all chronic and serious diseases. Eat more fermented foods like sauerkraut and kefir to benefit from the probiotic influence on Alzheimer's or take a daily supplement.

## **6 – Ginkgo Biloba**

Ginkgo biloba supplements have shown effectiveness in some studies for boosting heart health, clearing blocked arteries, promoting healthy blood circulation and calming the nerves of the brain. Additionally, some research shows ginkgo biloba can improve memory as well.

## **7 – The B Vitamin Family**

Research announced in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences show B vitamins can slow the speed in which Alzheimer's disease progresses. This is especially true for folic acid and vitamins B6 and B12. Taking a B vitamin super complex is a simple way to get your daily dose of important B family vitamins.

# Common Treatments to Help a Dementia Patient Deal with the Disease

Alzheimer's and dementia with Lewy bodies are two forms of dementia. Vascular dementia delivers dementia symptoms after a stroke has been experienced. There are several other causes of the cognitive decline and mental health problems which are identified by the blanket dementia term. Treatment often depends on the type of dementia involved, but in many cases, treatment protocols are similar, no matter the underlying cause.

Obviously, treatment cannot begin without a diagnosis. Your doctor or mental health care professional needs to fully understand what is happening before the appropriate treatment can improve quality of life. This is because some forms of dementia are treatable but irreversible, and some are totally reversible. This means a comprehensive diagnosis of dementia symptoms and their underlying cause is needed before a treatment is decided upon.

### **Treatment for Reversible Dementia**

In the case of reversible dementia, where the problem is triggered by thyroid problems, medication, vitamin or mineral deficiencies and other causes, treatment options could vary greatly. If the lack of a particular vitamin is leading to cognitive decline, memory loss and brain fog, or other telltale dementia symptoms, daily vitamin supplementation may be all that is required to fix the problem.

Hypothyroidism is a situation where not enough thyroid hormone is developed. When this is the cause of dementia symptoms and behaviors, a thyroid hormone prescription may fix the problem. You are probably well aware that many medications can sometimes cause dramatically negative side-effects. When a prescription is the underlying cause of dementia, changing medicines is often the treatment suggested.

### **Treating Irreversible Dementia**

Palliative care is at the basis of treating all forms of irreversible dementia. When dementia cannot be reversed, palliative care recognizes the futility of trying to

cure or remedy the condition. This means quality of life at every stage of dementia is stressed. Symptoms are treated with the hopes that the disease in question is minimized as much as possible.

Palliative care not only helps the dementia sufferer, but also the family and loved ones involved. The physical, mental and emotional concerns of the patient are all treated to make life as fulfilling and rewarding as possible. This may include the prescription of pain medications and memory-boosting medicines.

Cholinesterase inhibitors boost acetylcholine levels in the brain, and this can help improve judgment, focus, and memory. The prescription of some type of brand-name cholinesterase inhibitor can delay or slow the progression of dementia symptoms in some cases. Rivastigmine, Donepezil, and Galantamine are three cholinesterase inhibitors which are commonly prescribed for dementia treatment.

Memantine may be prescribed during moderate or severe stages of dementia. It increases cognitive function and is often prescribed to treat Alzheimer's and vascular dementia. Dietary changes away from processed food and to more of a plant-based diet have proven effective for treating some dementia symptoms, and exercise has shown to be beneficial as well.



# Dealing with a Dementia Patient Who Is Aggressive

The aggressive actions of a dementia sufferer can be physical or verbal in nature. Outbursts may occur suddenly, seemingly out of the blue. Imagine slowly losing your mental faculties, having a memory which comes and goes, and being frustrated by a feeling of helplessness. This is what the dementia patient goes through on a daily basis. On top of the mental causes for aggressive behavior, communication issues, environmental problems and being physically uncomfortable can cause someone to act out.

## **What Caused the Outlash?**

The first step to dealing with a dementia patient who is abusive or aggressive is to identify the cause. In most cases, the reason the dementia patient is upset is because of one of the 3 following factors.

**1 - Communication problems**

**2 - Physical discomfort**

**3 - Environmental issues**

Ask questions. Try to identify the underlying cause of the aggression. Understanding what causes aggressive behavior is the first step to removing or limiting that influence.

## **Communication Problems**

When someone with dementia is having a problem understanding you, she can become frustrated. She is trying very hard to communicate with you what is going on, but since she can't fully make out what you are saying or what you are asking, she becomes angry at her inability to communicate properly. This can lead to physical or verbal aggression.

Make sure you speak slowly and use simple instructions. It could be that you are making it difficult to understand what you are trying to communicate. Look the patient directly in the eyes when talking to them. Try not to cover too many topics or ask too many questions at once. Also, make sure any stress going on in your life is not coming across in your speech.

## **Physical Discomfort**

If you have ever been confined to an uncomfortable chair during a long business meeting, you know how your physical comfort level can dictate your mood. When you are uncomfortable and don't feel like you can remedy the situation, you might experience frustration and maybe even anger. Sometimes an uncomfortable situation that leads to aggressive behavior in a dementia patient can be caused by internal pain.

When aggression takes place, ask the patient if he is feeling internal or external pain. Is thirst or hunger a problem? Is the patient hot or cold? Did feelings of dis-

comfort appear shortly after taking a medication? These are the types of questions you should ask so you can alleviate whatever is causing physical pain or discomfort.

### **Environmental Causes**

The many forms of dementia are often accompanied by an inability to recognize surroundings. Did the person with dementia act out because she felt lost and didn't know where she was? Are there loud noises or many people speaking at the same time? These are just a few cases where a person's environment can cause them to act out. When any of a dementia sufferer's 5 senses are stressed to their limit, aggressive behavior can be the result.

## Dealing with Alzheimer's disease – 7 Stages and the Symptoms You Need to Know

Dementia is a term which refers to several causes of mental decline. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, and other types of dementia are also marked by memory loss, communication difficulties, reasoning, judgment and visual perception problems. Being able to identify symptoms is important because there are different signs which appear at different stages of Alzheimer's.

### 3 or 7 Stages?

Every Alzheimer patient is different from the next. This means the dementia experience will be different as well. In many cases though, mental health professionals have identified marked stages where certain symptoms appear. In some cases, the progression from one stage to the next is difficult to detect. Additionally, Alzheimer's is sometimes identified as having 3 stages by one doctor, and 7 by another.

The 3-stage Alzheimer's progression consists of 1) Early, 2) Moderate and 3) End classifications. Because the stages often include identifiable sub-stages, the most common practice adopted by health professionals who diagnose and treat Alzheimer's disease identifies a full 7 stages of progression.

- Stage 1 – No Impairment
- Stage 2– Very Mild Decline
- Stage 3 – Mild Decline
- Stage 4 – Moderate Decline
- Stage 5 – Moderately Severe Decline
- Stage 6 – Severe Decline
- Stage 7 – Very Severe Decline

In the first stage, Alzheimer's disease has already begun to develop. Even so, there are no recognizable health issues linked to mental decline. The first detectable stage where symptoms appear is in stage 2, with very mild issues developing. Someone in this Alzheimer's stage may begin misplacing items at work and at

home, and may just chalk up the forgetfulness to being busy or unfocused. Friends, family members, and coworkers probably won't notice any significant memory-related problems.

Stage 3 is usually the earliest phase where cognitive-related problems are noticeable. Someone with Alzheimer's at this stage may find it difficult to choose the right words or phrases during simple conversations. Short-term memory may be affected negatively. Issues with organizing or planning that were not previously present may pop up. Healthcare professionals will be able to detect reduced cognitive function through a number of tests.

Alzheimer's stage 4 shows definite symptoms of this form of dementia. The person in question may have difficulty with simple arithmetic and even forget personal life history details. Short-term memory continues to worsen. Stage 5 is marked by the inability to remember frequently used names and phone numbers. The person may become severely confused for no reason at all, and be incapable of dressing without help.

Stage 6 is where constant and professional supervision is usually required. The person with stage 6 Alzheimer's may wander aimlessly, get physically lost, lose bladder control, and experience drastic personality changes. Simple daily activities such as bathing and toileting require assistance, and the Alzheimer's sufferer may be unable to recognize the faces of friends and family members.

Stage 7 is the terminal phase of the debilitating Alzheimer's disease. The patient is incapable of responding to his or her environment, and communication is virtually impossible. Every aspect of personal living requires assistance, and the patient may lose the ability to swallow. Identification of symptoms is important so that Alzheimer's can be diagnosed as early as possible, and treatment can lead to the best quality of life.

# Is Dementia Reversible or Treatable?

## What is Dementia and Are You at Risk?

An adult somewhere in the world develops dementia every 3 seconds, according to Alzheimer's Disease International. Experts tell us global dementia cases will double approximately every 20 years, meaning as many as 75 to 80 million people in 2013 will have developed this debilitating condition. Modern science and technological breakthroughs mean human beings are living longer than ever before. Since most dementia cases develop after the age of 65, this means the longer you live, the greater your odds of developing dementia.

## What Exactly Is Dementia?

Dementia is not a single condition and is rather an umbrella word that refers to a group of symptoms. In all cases, dementia refers to severe declines in different mental abilities and functions that dramatically impact and interfere with daily life. In some case, this so negatively affects the brain and thinking skills that a person is unable to perform previously simple daily activities.

Alzheimer's disease is the most commonly recognized form of dementia, accounting for anywhere from 60% to 80% of dementia diagnoses. Vascular dementia is the onset of memory loss and other declines in mental function which occurs after a stroke. Also referred to as poststroke dementia, vascular dementia makes up about 10% of all dementia cases.

Dementia with Lewy bodies (DLB) is the third most common form of dementia. The memory loss and thinking issues common to Alzheimer's are present. However, people with DLB will often show early symptoms such as hallucinations and imbalance, sleep disturbances and slowness, which is not usually the case with Alzheimer's.

There are several different issues which can cause dementia symptoms to appear. In many cases, these mental health issues are treatable, but not curable. When vitamin deficiencies, thyroid problems and other factors of lifestyle conditions cause dementia symptoms, the problem can be reversed. The same is true when drugs, depression or hormonal imbalances are at the root of symptoms.

**When caused by trauma or disease, dementia is irreversible.**

Additionally, age-related memory loss does not necessarily mean that Alzheimer's or some other form of dementia is present. Depending on the severity of the condition and its underlying cause or causes, dementia can be effectively treated. While there is currently no cure that stops the progression of dementia, there are effective treatments and practices which can temporarily improve symptoms and quality of life, and sometimes slow down the progression of this disease.

Since dementia moves through several different stages, it is important to be diagnosed as early as possible if you have developed this condition. As people have become less active and many continue to eat processed foods regularly, foods which contain harmful additives, chemicals, pesticides and man-made minerals, the early onset of dementia has risen.

Additionally, dementia is not exclusive to the senior citizen crowd. If you or someone you know is displaying memory loss, uncharacteristic communication problems, has developed visual perception issues and has a problem paying attention and focusing, talk to your doctor about a dementia checkup. Beginning treatment as early as possible is vitally important to reversing this condition when possible, and treating accordingly when that is the only option.

## Dealing with Dementia – Organization and Routine Are Vital for Success

Some forms of dementia are treatable, but they cannot be reversed. Other types of dementia can be slowed or even reversed, as is the case with dementia caused by reactions to medicine or because of a thyroid imbalance. In every case, dementia is hallmarked by impaired cognitive function, memory loss, confusion and other similar brain-related issues.

This is why routine and organization are key components to helping you deal with dementia in yourself, or in a loved one.

### **The Importance of Routine and Repetition**

Have you ever driven to work but could not remember the journey which took you from your home to your workplace? This is not as uncommon an experience as you may think. When you travel the same route, at the same time, for the same reason, repetition can create blinders. Drive to work the same way and at the same time for years and your brain recognizes this habit.



You don't actually become blind to the driving experience, but it does begin to become automatic. In other words, your brain does not devote any thinking energy to the process. It knows what you will encounter along the way, and even if you are not thinking of the process, your brain, motor skills, nervous system and 5 senses work together to automatically get you from point A to point B without you having to devote much thought to what is going on.

This type of predictable routine can work wonders with dementia patients. Dementia is a progressive disease. Even if it is treated and slowed, symptoms will worsen over time. Getting routines in place as early as possible in the process can take a load off of the brain, which is the principal target of dementia.

## **Get Organized**

Organization is important in the treatment process as well. Emergency phone numbers and contact information, health insurance policies and personal information should be compiled and updated regularly. The living area of the dementia sufferer should be kept organized and clutter-free, and not just in a physical sense. Clutter can exist in many forms. Visual clutter and disruptive noises and sounds make it difficult for the dementia patient to think. Every sensory aspect of a dementia sufferer's environment should be organized.

This means not only organizing the activities of the person with dementia but also having clearly defined responsibilities for caregivers. Everyone involved in the caregiving process should know what schedule they are operating on. You should always have backup plans in place to ensure care is provided when needed.

Dementia is difficult for everyone involved. The mental toll on caregivers as well as the patient can be substantial. Taking time to simplify environments and remove clutter is important for successful treatment. Organization is a vital part of treating someone with dementia, which means planning, systems and processes can dramatically improve quality of life.

## How Exercise Can Help the Individual and the Family Dealing with Dementia

Exercise is beneficial no matter the level of fitness you enjoy. Low-impact exercises such as water aerobics and yoga are often prescribed to senior citizens to help increase quality of life. Exercise is beneficial for children and young adults, as well as those in their twenties, thirties, and adults experiencing middle-age. For mental and physical health benefits, regular physical activity provides a lot of rewards for dementia patients of any age.

### **The Social Benefit for Dementia Sufferers**

Human beings are social animals. The earliest humans found that by coming together in groups and working for the common good, survival rates increased. This is what led to the formation of the first cities and societies. The human brain is very good at recognizing things that help you live longer, and then embracing those things. This means that the brains in your earliest ancestors formed a base for your current genetic and mental makeup that makes you happier when you are frequently socializing.

There are significant bodies of research that show socializing offers immediate and long-term rewards to dementia patients. Humans are innately designed to operate better when they are around other humans, for the most part. It is in this way that group exercise can lend significant emotional and mental rewards to the dementia sufferer.

### **Exercise Improves Cognitive Function**

This is true in the healthy brain and the brain suffering from dementia. The mind and body are intimately connected. When you positively or negatively affect the health of one component, it influences another. Researchers have detected an undeniable link between better improved cognitive abilities and regular exercise. Since cognitive decline is the most identifiable symptom of dementia, the positive impact of exercise on this and other brain functions is important.

### **Getting the Family Involved**

When friends and family members join a dementia patient in exercising or physical activities, the rewards are substantial for everyone. When loved ones exercise with a dementia sufferer, personal relationships are improved, wonderful memories are created, and everyone enjoys a boost in physical health.

### **Exercise Doesn't Just Mean Lifting Weights or Running a Marathon**

When many people hear the word "exercise," they have negative connotations that jump to mind. Physical activity is what you are looking for. Moderate to intense physical exercise should only be attempted by a dementia patient in the

earlier stages of diagnosis, and if that activity is designated as safe by the patient's doctor. Those in moderate stages of dementia can benefit from walks with family members or caregivers, and other similar physical activities. Any consistent, regular physical activity which is at least a little bit demanding can improve mental and physical health metrics, and slow cognitive decline.

## Making Your Home Safe for a Dementia Sufferer

The American Association of Retired People is the largest organization exclusively for senior citizens in the United States, and they want to help you make your home safe for a family member with dementia. AARP offers discounted insurance plans to its members, and its annual membership fee is insignificant. The organization lets you join at age 50 rather than 55 like other senior citizen organizations, and whether you are a member or not, the official AARP website offers great advice for people over 50 years of age.

Many of the blog posts found at [AARP.org](http://AARP.org) focus on improving quality of life for senior citizens. The company does a good job of addressing senior-related health issues such as Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. The following tips offered by AARP can help improve the safety of your home for a live-in dementia sufferer, or occasional visitor.

## **Clear the Clutter**

Studies show that physical clutter limits productivity, interrupts focus and clarity of thought, and has other negative consequences on mental health. When you clear your home of items, products, and possessions which are distracting and possibly causing safety hazards, you make your home safer for a dementia sufferer and your family.

## **Don't Assume Anything**

You know you really need to organize your garage, but your family member with dementia will never need to go there, so you figure there is no rush tackling this project. You should not assume that someone with dementia is only going to visit specific areas of your home. In the late stages of different types of dementia, physical wandering is a typical symptom. You need to evaluate every room and closet or storage space in your home to provide the safest possible environment.

## **Safety-Proof Your Kitchen**

Dementia often leads to behaviors that can be dangerous for everyone in the home. What could possibly happen if a family member with dementia woke up in the middle of the night, entered your kitchen, and turned on your gas stove? This situation brings to light a simple safety measure that makes your possibly dangerous kitchen safe for everyone in your home.

You can install circuit breakers or gas valves which must be accessed before kitchen appliances can be used. These safety measures should be hidden from the

dementia sufferer. You can also purchase appliances with automatic shut-off features.

## **Regular Safety Checks**

Do your smoke detectors have fresh batteries in them? How frequently do you have fire extinguishers checked? Dementia symptoms worsen over time, which means a safe house today may not be a safe home tomorrow. Constantly evaluate your home's safety measures, making changes wherever and whenever they are needed.

## **Update Contact Information**

Do you know the number for your local poison control center? When was the last time you updated the phone numbers of your neighbors, friends and family members you can depend on in an emergency? Does everyone in your family know where to find the contact information for local police and fire departments? Insurance forms, lists of medications, and all the above information need to be compiled and available at a moment's notice, and everyone in your family should know where to access this information.

## **Turn Out the Lights**

As mentioned earlier, dementia patients can sometimes get up and wander around your home in the middle of the night. You may have the best of intentions, and spend a lot of time and energy making your home safe for a family member with dementia. People generally safety-proof their homes with the lights

on. Things look different when familiar environments are dark. Walk around your home at night and you may realize the installation of nightlights is a simple safety measure that could prevent serious injuries.

## Self-Care Tips for the Dementia Patient

For the dementia sufferer in a modern country, there are usually plenty of federal and local healthcare facilities where they can turn for help. Family members and friends form the basis of loving and caring support networks in many cases. On the other hand, you may live in a rural setting, far from healthcare resources. You may find yourself alone, with no support network.

Perhaps you live far from a dementia sufferer you care about, and you want that person to understand there are things he or she can do to improve quality of life. For whatever reason, dementia sufferers often have to take care of themselves, at least on a partial basis. For you or the person in your life that has dementia, the following self-care tips have proven effective for improving quality of life and promoting independence.

### **Embrace the Good Times**

Some days are better than others. This is true for everyone at any stage of life, but for the dementia sufferer, this is especially the case. When you are having one of those positively memorable days with your family and friends, and your dementia symptoms are invisible or barely present, enjoy the moment. While dementia does make for frustrating, confusing, depressing and stressful situations, there are

good times as well. Embrace any positive experience you have while attempting to cope with dementia, no matter how small.

### **Live One Day at a Time**

Recognize your present moment in time. This means living one moment and one day at a time. You should certainly plan for the future and enjoy any fond memories you have of the past. Additionally, you need to "live in the now," since dementia does not promise mental health and the ability to remember your experiences in the future.

### **Drink Water Regularly**

In more than one study, Alzheimer's patients saw their memory improve simply because they began drinking water several times a day. Water has life-giving and healing powers, it cleanses your body of toxins and poisons, and 65% of your body is composed of water on average. It is important for everyone to drink water throughout the day, especially someone suffering from dementia.

### **Drink Green Tea**

Green tea has been used for thousands of years for healing purposes. There is plenty of research which indicates that drinking green tea helps cognitive function. One study out of the University of Singapore indicates that cognitive impairment in people over 50 years of age can be reduced by as much as 50% simply by drinking green tea daily.



## **Don't Be Afraid to Ask for Help**

Dementia can rob you of your independence. This may mean that when you realize you need help, you are reluctant to reach out. Dementia becomes progressively worse. If you don't turn to the ones you love and let them know you have a problem now, you could be inviting needless emotional and physical pain and suffering in the future.

## **Miscellaneous Dementia Self-Care Tips**

Eat healthy food. Eat more natural foods like fruits and vegetables, and fewer processed, canned, fried and frozen foods. If you are tired, lay down and enjoy a rest. Stay constantly connected to the ones you love on a daily basis. Ask your doctor what she recommends to help you stay active, enjoying the benefits of exercise. If you can, bathe or shower every day. Look after yourself. These and the above tips can help you care for yourself if you experience dementia, and help you enjoy the best quality of life.

# Talking to a Parent with Dementia

With Alzheimer's, vascular dementia, dementia with Lewy bodies and other forms of this debilitating disease, the child often becomes the parent. Dementia is much more likely to appear in someone over 65 as opposed to a younger person. The accompanying decline in mental abilities can lead to symptoms and behaviors which flip the parent/child dynamic. After decades of speaking to your parent in a certain way, you suddenly have to change how you communicate. The following

tips have proven effective for talking to a parent that has dementia, so this difficult situation is as beneficial as can be for both parties.

### **Only Talk about One Thing at a Time**

One surefire trigger for frustration, aggression and sometimes anger in a dementia patient is confusion. Depending on what you have to say, you may have several things you need to communicate to your parent. Even so, each topic should be taken in turn, and you need to make sure your parent is fully aware and understands what you are talking about before moving on to something else.

### **The Dementia Sufferer Should Only Talk to One Person at a Time**

One of the side-effects of dementia is a reduced ability to process incoming sensory input. This means you should limit the number of people who are talking to your parent at any given time. If you and another family member need to communicate with your parent, develop a game plan beforehand. Don't interrupt each other. Let one person talk at a time, and allow your parent to respond to each person before the next person chimes in.

### **Don't Argue with Your Mom or Dad**

As a caregiver, you can become as frustrated and angry as your parent with dementia. Sometimes you need to simply get up and walk away. Escalating arguments almost never improve communication channels, and this is evermore the case when dementia is involved.

## **Understand Communication May Be Physical Instead of Verbal**

In the later stages of many forms of dementia, verbal communication is extremely difficult, if not impossible. You may notice your parent is trying to "talk" to you through body language or facial expressions. When dementia becomes so problematic that verbal communication is tough, talk to your parent about developing some sort of physical communication channel.

## **Eliminate Distractions**

Have you ever tried to talk someone that was sitting next to you in a noisy, loud concert or event? Sometimes it is virtually impossible. Eliminating distractions helps improve the possibility that two parties can communicate with each other effectively. In the case of dementia, your parent needs minimal distractions to communicate properly.

## **Don't Get Frustrated**

If you are frustrated about the inability to communicate with your parent, think about how they feel? You can't let your own busy life and personal responsibilities negatively affect this difficult situation. If your parent doesn't seem to be able to understand or respond to what you are saying, try a different approach, reword your speech, and calmly begin again.