

— CARING ABOUT —
Dementia



A summary of the video series
from HealthWISE and Newcastle
Permanent Charitable Foundation


HealthWISE
Mental Health · Allied Health · Aboriginal Health

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“ The person living with dementia may not remember the day, but they can enjoy the moment.”

Carers do an amazing job in looking after the person for whom they are caring. You are also human and are going to feel frustration and anger at times. The important thing is to learn as much as you can about dementia.

The videos give you some tips and hints to support your family member or friend that might make life as a carer a bit easier. This booklet is a compendium to the series which summarises the main points from each video.



Watch the videos and learn more:
Search 'healthwisenenw' on YouTube
E: dementia@healthwisenenw.com.au
f t @ @healthwisenenw
P: 1800 931 540



You can use your phone's camera to scan the QR code to go direct to our YouTube channel

About Sally

Sally Henry has more than 15 years' experience working with people living with dementia and their carers. Her role as Carer Consultant for this video series, 'Caring about Dementia' is to provide advice and suggestions which carers might find helpful, when caring for a person living with dementia.

The information provided in this video series is general in nature and should not be used as a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always seek the advice of your doctor or local healthcare provider.



1 Communication

- ✓ It's important to always introduce yourself when greeting the person living with dementia so they can put you in context.
- ✓ Reduce confusion by not making complex statements or asking complicated questions. For example, don't open the wardrobe and ask "what do you want to wear"; instead choose a couple of outfits and give them the option. This makes the person feel like they are still contributing.
- ✓ Messages on a white board can be a useful tool.
- ✓ When travelling, to reduce the endless "where are we going", have a sign in front of the person with their destination written on it.
- ✓ Labels and pictures of the contents of a cupboard can also be very useful, reduce stress and help maintain independence.

2 Distraction and Redirection

Sometimes people with dementia can become agitated or fixated. Rather than argue, some tips might be:

- ✓ Put on their favourite music, low and slow.
- ✓ Sit down at their level, look at the person and try and engage with them. Don't worry if it is a one-way conversation.
- ✓ Go for a walk or drive.
- ✓ Never underestimate the power of a cup of tea. It often changes the train of thought and mood and enables the carer to distract and redirect the person living with dementia.
- ✓ Keep in mind things may not work every time, it doesn't mean you've failed. You just need to approach the problem from another angle.

Never underestimate the power of a cup of tea.



3 Personal Care

- ✓ If the person living with dementia refuses to shower or bathe, don't argue the point, distract and come back to the activity later, for example, change the wording "Hello John, I know this is when you like to have your shower, so I have just turned on the taps and got your towel ready." The idea is to invite them rather than demand or dictate they do something.
- ✓ For people who won't wash their hair, sometimes a visit to the hairdressers will be more acceptable.
- ✓ Play music as a calming effect during personal care tasks.
- ✓ If you don't succeed at first, leave for a half to one hour and then try again, not making any reference to previous attempts.

“The idea is to invite them rather than demand or dictate they do something.”

4 Driving

- ✓ When a person first receives a diagnosis of dementia, all drivers are required by law to tell their local licensing authority* of the change in their medical condition.
- ✓ This doesn't mean they will automatically lose their licence; they may be granted a conditional licence.
- ✓ It's important to listen to your Doctor and what's required in your State – there can be consequences if you don't follow the rules.
- ✓ It's a very difficult stage for people, if they lose their license.
- ✓ If the person refuses to stop driving, you can try – hiding the car keys; disabling the car; talking to the local mechanic about saying there is 'a problem' with the car and they need to keep it for a while; or sell the car.
- ✓ Try to be as gentle as possible.
- ✓ Sometimes you have to involve the local police. They can have a gentle chat to the person and tell them they can't drive anymore.

* or the licensing authority in your state



It's a very difficult stage for people, if they lose their licence.



5 Self Care for Carers

- ✓ If you don't look after yourself, you can't look after your loved one.
- ✓ It is important to continue with activities and interests that give you pleasure, as much as you can. This can help you cope with the road ahead.
- ✓ Give yourself permission to take a break and not feel guilty.
- ✓ Take time out – access respite. Have a list of the person's normal routine, as well as likes and dislikes, favourite clothes, music etc for the respite carer to use.
- ✓ Attend carer groups and access the Dementia Helplines for counselling, education and advice when needed. Dementia Australia: 1800 100 500 (Mon–Fri 9am–5pm). Dementia Support Australia 24 hour helpline: 1800 699 799.
- ✓ Remember, what works one day, may not work the next day.

**“ If you don't look after yourself,
you can't look after your loved one.”**



6 Carers Morning Tea: Episode 1

Sally and Cate share morning tea with a group of carers discussing their journey through diagnosis and stages of caring for a person living with dementia. They discuss:

- ✓ How they accessed help during the diagnosis phase.
- ✓ The importance of education about dementia.
- ✓ Cups of tea and carers getting together at Carer Groups.
- ✓ How they looked after themselves.
- ✓ How they involve their person living with dementia in daily activities in a meaningful way.
- ✓ Concentrating on what the person with dementia can still do, not what they can no longer manage.
- ✓ Dealing with the emotions of the person for whom they care – try not to argue.

7 Carers Morning Tea: Episode 2 Suggestions for new carers

A group of carers discuss useful tips on what worked for them.

- ✓ Learn 'to step into their world.'
- ✓ Be flexible and 'go with the flow'.
- ✓ Deciding when to tell family and friends.
- ✓ Be kind to yourself when you care for a person living with dementia.
- ✓ Don't feel guilty as a Carer.
- ✓ Laughter and patience helps.
- ✓ Applying for a carers allowance or pension.
- ✓ Tips for dressing – save yourself some work by limiting the clothes in the wardrobe.
- ✓ Tips for safety – hot water use – you can have the hot water regulated.

8 Carers Morning Tea: Episode 3 Looking after yourself

Our carer group discuss:

- ✓ Looking after their physical and mental wellbeing.
- ✓ The importance of being involved in your community and maintaining outside interests.
- ✓ Exercise; hobbies socialising with friends.
- ✓ Accessing in-home and residential respite.
- ✓ They also discuss changes to their lives when their person living with dementia goes into residential care or passes away.

9 Professor Sue Kurrle (Geriatrician) Caring about Dementia



Professor Sue Kurrle is a Geriatrician (Aged Care Specialist) working in Sydney with a wealth of experience working with people living with dementia and their Carers. She speaks about:

- ✓ the importance of exercise and exercise as a 'pill'
- ✓ driving
- ✓ confusion
- ✓ pain
- ✓ sleep
- ✓ weight loss
- ✓ wandering
- ✓ visual problems

10 Bits and Bobs

Sally chats about a variety of tips including:

- ✓ Breaking down tasks to still involve your person living with dementia.
- ✓ Visual cues (ie. not putting white plates on a white table).
- ✓ Using alarms if wandering is a concern.
- ✓ Offering finger food rather than using cutlery, when the person won't sit for a meal.
- ✓ The importance of a hug.





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