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living with alzheimer's

for care partners

living with Alzheimer's

Learning objectives: Early-Stage Program

Objectives:

- Describe the symptoms of the early stage of Alzheimer's disease.
- Explain the legal, financial and resource planning that needs to be done in the early stage.
- Define the components of a care team and describe how to successfully work with each component during the early stage of the disease.

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Part 1

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Understanding dementia

- Dementia is a general term for a group of brain disorders that affect:
 - Thinking
 - Memory
 - Judgment
 - Personality
- There are different types of dementia, including:
 - Alzheimer's disease
 - Vascular dementia
 - Mixed dementia
 - Dementia with Lewy bodies
 - Frontotemporal dementia
 - Parkinson's disease

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Understanding Alzheimer's disease

- Alzheimer's disease causes problems with:
 - Memory
 - Thinking
 - Behavior
- It is not a normal part of aging.
- Symptoms can vary among individuals.
- The disease leads to nerve cell death and tissue loss throughout the brain, affecting nearly all its functions.

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Understanding Alzheimer's disease

- Alzheimer's disease has no cure.
- Behavioral and environmental interventions are most effective and should be tried first.
- Two types of medication treatments offer modest help:
 - Cholinesterase inhibitors
 - NMDA receptor antagonists
- For more information, see the Alzheimer's Association's brochure, "The Basics of Alzheimer's Disease"

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Early-stage symptoms

- Memory changes
- Changes in executive functioning
- Concentration changes
- Difficulty with reasoning and abstract thinking
- Difficulty with language and ability to communicate
- Impaired judgment
- Confusion with time or place
- Difficulty with visual-spatial relations
- Withdrawal from work or social activities
- Personality changes

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Early symptoms



Alan has a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease.

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Developing a "new normal"

Words from a caregiver:

"Success means that you have found a way to be happy within the confines of this disease."

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Where to start?

- Accepting the diagnosis
- Developing your care team
- Beginning to make plans for the future
 - Legal
 - Financial
 - Future care
 - Safety
- Living each day to the fullest

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Accepting the diagnosis

- Accept that future plans will change



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Accepting the diagnosis

- Accept that future plans will change
- Accept your feelings



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Accepting the diagnosis

- Accept that future plans will change
- Accept your feelings
- Give yourself time



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First steps



Kitty's husband, Bill, has a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease.

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Forming your care team



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You and the person with dementia

Work as a unit to:

- Monitor shifts in functioning
- Prepare for appointments by:
 - Choosing times together
 - Discussing the monitored changes
 - Noting questions and concerns
 - Reviewing care plans as a team

Person with AD & care partner

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Communication skills



John's wife, Mary Ann, has a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease

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You and the person with dementia

Optimize the person's sense of well-being through:

- Physical exercise
 - Gardening
 - Walking
- Mental stimulation
 - Reading
 - Discussing issues of interest
- Social interaction
 - Maintain contact with friends, family and community

Person with AD & care partner

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You and the person with dementia

Care partner teams are more successful at navigating health care systems.

- Assist by:
 - Keeping a record of changes and questions to bring to doctors' appointments
 - Being present at appointments, asking questions and taking notes

Person with AD & care partner

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You and the person with dementia



Trish's husband, Bob, has a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease.

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The care partner's roles

A care partner has multiple roles:

- Encourager
- Companion
- Supporter
- Planner
- Money manager
- Advocate



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Tips for coping with symptoms



Helping the person with dementia stay independent

- Use notes and calendars
- Stay organized
- Assist without offending

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Staying active



Carol's husband, Bob, has a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease.

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Tips for helping the person stay active

- Continue everyday tasks and routines to maintain sense of self
- Focus on unique strengths and interests
- Modify activities to match abilities
- Adapt activities over time
- Plan for rest periods
- Concentrate on the process, not on the result



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Live in the present



Greg's wife, Laura, has a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease.

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Maintaining closeness and intimacy



Closeness can be enhanced by:

- Using loving words and physical touch
- Engaging in shared experiences that include touch
- Discussing issues directly
- Taking care of yourself and get support

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Tips for coping

Your role is made easier by:

- Asking for and accept help from others
- Sharing your feelings
- Listening without judging
- Communicating that you will be there
- Working as a team
- Experiencing moments together
- Determining what really matters
- Doing it now
- Redefining intimacy

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