

Selected Topics for Guidance of Family Members Caring for Relatives with Dementia

1. The role of **language and wording** used to describe people living with dementia and their behavioral expressions.
2. Evidence-based dementia-specific **approaches and communication techniques**.
3. Psychosocial **strategies for prevention** and de-escalation of various forms of **behavioral expressions** (such as rejection of care and those labeled “aggressive”).
4. The role and impact of the **physical environment** on people with dementia and the ways in which it could be adapted to optimize the person’s function and well-being.
5. **Close trusting relationship** and “Authentic Partnership” as the most important assets we can have when working with and caring for people with dementia. The importance of knowing and using the early-life history of the person with dementia.
6. The importance of mourning and accepting the person’s cognitive changes and **focusing on their remaining abilities**: A Strength-Based Approach. This, while understanding and proactively compensating for the cognitive and other disabilities.
7. The critical role of **engagement in personally meaningful activities** throughout the day, evening, and at times at night. Guidance in choosing and offering evidence-based activities in line with the person’s abilities, disabilities, and preferences.
8. The importance of **shifting from reactive to proactive mode of care**: Adopting an Anticipatory Care Approach.
9. The importance of **genuinely listening to the person** with dementia...even in the later stages of dementia and when they can no longer speak. People with dementia are the best teachers. They actually know what it means to live with the disease...
10. The importance of **documentation** of the circumstances and situational triggers of various forms of behavioral expressions: Using a Behavioral Expressions Log.
11. The critical importance of **seeking assistance and support from others** – within one’s family and outside guidance from experienced and skilled professionals. About 30% of family care partners (particularly older spouses) die before the person with dementia. Caring family members need regular support, time off, and respite in order to maintain their own health and psychological well-being and continue to provide effective care for their loved ones. The quality of care of people with dementia is only as good as the quality of support and education provided to family care partners.