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Alzheimer's Disease: Tips for Having a Successful Visit

If your loved one has Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia, you may not know what to expect when you visit them. You may fear they will not remember you, you won't know what to say to them or you will not know how to act around them. There is no one specific roadmap for what you and your loved one's journey through Alzheimer's disease or dementia will bring; however, there is plenty that can be done in order to ensure a successful visit with your loved one, no matter who is visiting.

What to Keep in Mind When Visiting Your Loved One With Alzheimer's or Dementia

As Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia progress, your loved one may have a harder time recognizing who you or other family members and friends are. For this reason, it can help to introduce yourself. Refrain from asking if your loved one remembers you or knows who you are, as this can cause them to become upset. In order to ensure a successful visit, keep this tip and the following in mind:

- **Keep it simple.** According to the [Alzheimer's Association](#)[®], keeping visits simple can make for the best experience during a visit. Loud and noisy places can cause those with Alzheimer's or dementia to become agitated and stressed. To combat this, try finding a calm, quiet and comfortable place where you can be alone and less distracted.
- **Lower your expectations.** It's possible that your visit may not go as you had expected. Your loved one may not be as lucid as you would like, they may be more unsettled than normal or they may even revert to their own version of reality. Just hold their hand, reassure them you are there for them and you love them. While your visit may not go as planned, enjoy your time with them.
- **Do not take things personally.** Loved ones with Alzheimer's or dementia do not have control over their actions. This means that if they cannot convey themselves or their thoughts the right way or if they lash out in anger at you, it is most likely not because you did anything wrong, but because they do not know how to communicate with you. Try not to take this personally, as many times this has nothing to do with you and they are simply frustrated because they are trying their hardest.
- **Be flexible.** If you had activities planned for you and your loved one, be prepared for the plans to change. When visiting someone with Alzheimer's disease or dementia, especially in the later stages, you will need to be flexible. The article states that activities may need to be switched around and changed out, as what used to work when visiting your loved one may not work as well the next time. Be flexible and have more than one activity available just in case.

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Activities to Engage Your Loved One While Visiting

According to the Alzheimer's Association®, when visiting your loved one with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia, it can help to plan activities that "engage several senses and have meaning for your loved one." The following ideas can be personalized based on one your loved one's abilities and interests.

- **Listen to music.** If your loved one used to play an instrument or loved to sing, put some of their favorite songs on. Music is known to connect those with memory loss to their past and can help to lighten their mood, make them able to remember past memories and even potentially dance.
- **Reminisce together.** If your loved one is particularly connected to a specific part of their past, talk about it. Go through old photo albums and tell stories about the people in the photographs. Try to talk mainly about events that happened in their younger days, as those memories are easier to recall than more recent ones.
- **Make something.** No matter if it's art, music or a memory box, just start making something. Art in any form is therapeutic and can help your loved one to release some stress they have been carrying with them. Your loved one may be able to convey their emotions through paint better than through their words. They may not be able to remember many old stories, but if they see a picture in their memory box it might become easier to recall that moment. Making something together cannot only help you and your loved one connect, but it can be a crucial outlet for them, as well.

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