

5 Tips for Helping Families and Loved Ones with Dementia Enjoy Time Together in 2019

Family time together is priceless. However, meaningful family time can be a challenge for individuals with Alzheimer's disease or other related dementias, as they may not be able to communicate as well as they used to or share their thoughts and engage as easily as before. Families spending their time with someone who has dementia can help themselves and their loved ones enjoy those times even more with a little preparation.

Below are five holistic ways to engage those who have dementia by focusing on their sustained ability, called Habilitation, of creating emotional connections using Sensory-based Information (i.e., processing information through stimulating one's senses – i.e., eyesight [visual], hearing [auditory], touch [tactile], taste [gustatory], smell [olfactory]). These five tips can elicit positive emotional reactions, and therefore, establish meaningful connections.

TIP #1

When visiting a loved one with dementia, bring a pet. The unconditional love of pets offers a wonderful connection to someone who may not always be able to fully communicate. It also provides tactile, visual and auditory stimulation, can improve mood, and increase physical activity. Furry friends also assist as conversation starters. If a real pet is not available or may be overwhelming for your loved one, try a realistic, life-like puppy or kitten, called a Companion Pet.

TIP #2

While spending time together, provide your loved one with an object they can hold to reduce confusion and fear, referred to as grounding. This helps in rewiring the brain to form new connections, called neuroplasticity, causing a grounding effect. A great product that can be used is any small exercise object, like a stress ball, hand exerciser, or tangled object. Objects such as these provide tactile stimulation, assist with manual dexterity, increase physical activity, and improve mood.

TIP #3

Depression can occur during winter; additionally,

depression is 40 percent common in those who have dementia. There are ways to minimize or prevent depression, such as regularly taking Vitamin D, exercising, having a healthy diet, and maintaining a set routine. Sunlight also can help ward off depression. But how can one get sunlight during Chicago's winter months? Light therapy machines have been developed to provide effective relief from depression. It is a lightweight, small box that provides enough light as standing outdoors on a clear, sunny day. Through tactile stimulation, light therapy has been shown to regulate a person's body clock, improve mood, and even reduce pain.

TIP #4

As cognitive loss progresses, your loved one may be prone to mood swings. Such behavior can hinder the desire to visit and/or make communication awkward. To address these symptoms, aromatherapy can be used. Aromatherapy is the safe, all-natural and effective use of essential oils through olfactory, tactile, or gustatory stimulation to provide healing of the mind, body, and spirit. For example, lavender is a scent that can bring about a calming sensation. Essential oils can also be used to entice appetite, reduce anxiety, help with sleep, increase energy, improve attention and concentration, and much more.

TIP #5

Through auditory stimulation, music has been found to have many benefits for those with dementia. If your loved one likes music, playing songs they know can help improve mood, increase awareness and clear thinking, and reduce potential signs of sun downing, common with those who have Alzheimer's disease. Get ready to play their notable favorites!

The New Year brings about so many possibilities and resolutions. Utilizing these holistic techniques can enhance quality of time spent with your loved one with dementia. If you are interested in any of the memory care products mentioned, contact Dr. Stelter at 773-315-9224 or the Alden Network's Prism Health Care at 800-493-7200 or visit <http://www.PrismHC.com/MemoryCare>.

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THE ALDEN NETWORK



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ABOUT THE ALDEN NETWORK

For over 45 years, the Alden Network has provided health care and residential solutions for seniors to help them function to the best of their ability and live life as independently as possible. Alden's Memory Care Program specializes in a holistic approach to quality care and services for individuals with Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, and other related dementias. Visit our website at <https://www.thealden-network.com/care-options/memory-care-dementia/>.