

Care Giving In the Time Of COVID

By Tami Anastasia, M.A.

Who would have thought, in the Spring of 2020 that all our lives would change in such dramatic ways? For caregivers of loved ones living with dementia, life had already changed dramatically. But now, COVID has made caregiving even more demanding, difficult and challenging. In addition, COVID has brought to the surface a lot of underlying feelings and emotions. For example, many caregivers are feeling overwhelmed, exhausted and stressed. Others are feeling a profound sense of loss and sadness as they watch their love one decline before their eyes. And, others are sharing the despair they feel not being able to visit their love one in a care community.

Either way, COVID has altered our daily routines which in turn has made our lives more complex and complicated.

Whether you are caring for a loved one at home with dementia, or your loved one is residing in a care community, below are some COVID C.A.R.E.® strategies to help you survive these unsettling and unprecedented times. C.A.R.E.® is an acronym that provides caregivers with practical strategies during the time of COVID.

C: Comfort: Find ways to comfort yourself. When we're consumed with caregiving, there is a tendency for us to forget to do things that are comforting, nurturing and grounding. Make a conscious effort to take a daily 10-minute

time out and do something that is comforting or nurturing, such as, gardening, journaling, meditating, listening to music, praying, drawing, hiking. Taking a daily 10-minute time out also reminds you to make yourself a priority.

A: Activities: Engage your loved one in meaningful activities. Think of activities in terms of "helper" activities, such as, folding, cleaning, stacking, or "problem solving" activities, such as, fixing something, solving a puzzle, seek and find words, or "fun/leisure/entertainment" activities, such as watching movies, eating ice cream, going for scenic drives or "physical" activities such as, dancing together, chair exercises, going for walks. Do activities that give you and your loved one a sense of purpose and value, a sense of connectedness and make your loved one feel important and special. Keep in mind, you may need to modify or simplify the activities according to your loved one's cognitive and physical abilities.

R: Routine & Rituals: Establish a consistent routine and new rituals. For most of us, our routine prior to COVID has been altered and we've been in limbo wondering what is going to happen. As time has passed, it's become more and more clear that our lives are not going to go back to the way it was prior to COVID. The key

is replacing the activities you can't do with new activities you can or are doing and to get on a consistent schedule. Get up and go to bed, eat your meals, and plan activities around the same time every day so there are things for you and your loved one to look forward to. Those activities could be rituals such as designating certain times and days of the week that you and your love one work on puzzles or play games, or go for walks, sing songs together, or watch movies, or do arts and crafts. For those of you who can't visit your loved one in a care community, you might designate certain times and days of the week you call, send cards, or schedule window visits so you can tell your loved one "you love them", "you miss them" and "you're thinking of them."

Establishing a consistent routine and creating new rituals provides meaning, value, purpose, structure and normalcy to our day which is very important right now.

E: Establish a Support Network and an Emergency Plan: Create a support network so you have people to share your thoughts, feelings, concerns and frustrations with. Your support network could consist of family and friends, joining a support group, spiritual guide/leader/community, licensed therapist, counselor, MD, or hiring companion care or home care assistance. As the saying goes, we are all in this together and we all need someone to

talk to. And, make talking to your support network part of your weekly/daily schedule.

And, establish an emergency plan. What emergency plan do you have in place if something should happen to you or your loved one? Develop a 'plan', write it down, share it with others. At the very least, get medical/life alert for you and your loved one. And, if you haven't already done it, now is the time to get your medical and legal documents in order.

During a time of crisis and uncertainty, it is even more important to focus on what you CAN do for your yourself and your loved one. C.A.R.E.® for yourself and your loved one takes some thinking and planning but it can have a positive impact on both of you.

Tami Anastasia, M.A. is the founder of TAMS Alzheimer's and Dementia Support. She has a private counseling practice and provides in person or phone support, guidance and care strategies for families caring for a loved one living with Alzheimer's and dementia. Tami also facilitates three Alzheimer's Support Groups and conducts Monthly Dementia Caregiver Workshops with ElderConsult Geriatric Medicine as well as One-to-One Consultation sessions via video conference. Contact Tami at (408) 377-4716, or email her at tamswellness@gmail.com, or on her website: www.tamsads.com.



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Taking Action to Protect America's Nursing Home Residents Against COVID-19

By Seema Verma
Administrator, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Service

ing home residents against the spread of this new coronavirus.

We understand how terrifying these outbreaks are for nursing home residents and their families, and how essential it is for them to know what is going on inside nursing homes.

So, we acted accordingly. Beginning in May, CMS required nursing homes that participate in Medicare and Medicaid to inform residents, their families, and their representatives within 12 hours of when a single confirmed COVID-19 case is reported, or when three or more residents or staffers develop

respiratory symptoms within 72 hours of each other.

Residents, families, and their representatives also must be given weekly updates or be told by the end of the next day each time a subsequent COVID-19 case is confirmed and/or three or more residents or staffers develop respiratory symptoms within 72 hours of each other.

Nursing homes also must include information about what actions they're taking to prevent or reduce the risk of transmission, and inform

See **NURSING HOME**
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