



MASE Monthly Newsletter - April 2018



Proud recipients of The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and The British Citizen Award for work in the Community

The value of good Friends

A friend is someone who knows the song in your heart and can sing it back to you when you have forgotten the words. Make sure you keep your friends informed as to the true nature of your loved one's illness and keep them close at hand to help with difficult days that may be ahead. Sometimes a person with dementia can become aggressive. Not everyone does, but when it happens it is dreadful and it hurts the one person who is doing their best to help. Always keep health professionals informed of any radical change in behaviour patterns. No Carer should ever be subjected to any form of violence. There are many reasons for aggressive behaviour which are to do with the fact that the person has memory and reasoning issues, eg they may be hallucinating, or be feeling anxious. Fear can be a huge issue, also anger and frustration can sometimes lead to violence. Aggressive behaviour is an understandable response from a person who misinterprets what is happening, because of deficits in their understanding and memory. They know something is wrong and can get angry and often very scared. If only Carers were able to see the world through the eyes of their loved ones, then understanding would be so much easier.



Food & Drink



Why are those with dementia at risk of under-nutrition and dehydration?

Losing weight is common in people living with dementia, who may find eating and drinking difficult, or refuse food or drink for a number of reasons:

- Problems expressing hunger/thirst, or dislike of a particular food or drink
- A lack of interest in food may be caused by low mood
- Confusion in recognising and remembering how to eat
- Concentration can be poor, making it difficult to sit down and finish a meal
- Reduced thirst sensation
- Limited recognition of hunger
- Paranoia surrounding food
- Difficulties chewing and swallowing

Why is eating and drinking well so important?

Becoming dehydrated can put older people at risk of many health conditions, such as reduced cognitive status, incontinence, constipation, increased tiredness, low blood pressure, and can increase the risk of falls as a result of dizziness and confusion.

It is recommended people drink around 6-8 glasses of fluid each day (1500 ml).

However any increase in fluid intake will be really beneficial.

Under-nutrition and loss of body mass can cause a more rapid progression of dementia as well as increasing the risk of complications, such as pressure sores, infections, and falls and fractures.

Other challenges associated with dementia include:

- Reduced thirst sensation
- Limited recognition of hunger, together with a complete paranoia surrounding food
- Difficulties with chewing and swallowing



Alzheimer's Society Dementia Helpline 0300 222 1122 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday and Saturday and Sunday 10am - 4pm.

Daphne Sharp ☎ 01785 211140 or 07939 505455
Elaine Dunlop ☎ 01785 823110 or 07812 440226

MASE Co-ordinators
MASE

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Dealing with Guilt

People who care for someone with dementia often talk about feeling guilty, even if others are reassuring them that they are doing the best they possibly can. If we look at some of the issues that cause guilt, it is important to learn to deal with these feelings, and we need to consider some ways to go about doing this.

As a Carer, you are likely to feel a wide range of emotional responses to your situation – both positive and negative. This is because although caring can be very rewarding, it is also hard work and can be extremely stressful. Some of the emotions that arise, such as grief and anger, are healthy responses to challenging circumstances. They can be useful, helping us to move forward. But other emotions, such as guilt, can be destructive, leaving us feeling powerless or 'stuck'.

Guilt can be a very tiring emotion, consuming energy that you need for other tasks. If you have identified that you have feelings of guilt, you have already taken the first step towards addressing these feelings. The next steps are to:

- Work out where these feelings come from
- Realise that you are not alone in feeling this way
- Find ways to develop a more positive attitude and to be more forgiving of yourself.

How you treated the person before they were diagnosed

Many Carers feel bad about how they behaved towards the person before they were diagnosed with dementia. You may have reacted with irritation or criticism, or you may wish that you had made more of the time you spent with the person when they were well.

Remember that everyone gets frustrated with their partner or family members from time to time. You weren't to know that they had dementia, and you couldn't have foreseen what the future held. Dementia can have a profound effect on a person's personality, and without advice or guidance this can be very difficult to understand.

Remember also that it is human to make mistakes, no person can get things right all the time. There is no such thing as the 'Perfect Carer', and it is important not to be too hard on yourself. Ask yourself if you are setting realistic limits to what you can achieve? If not, can you reduce any of the demands you make on yourself, or is there perhaps someone you could ask for additional help.

Sometimes we try to keep the stiff upper lip and carry on because we think it is our duty. Talk to people, tell them how you are feeling, particularly ex-Carers you have walked the pathway you are on; you will be amazed how many people will offer you the hand of friendship and give you the tips and tricks that helped them during a difficult time.

Springtime - thinking of changing your home decor?

- Try not to make unnecessary changes in the home as your cared for may well struggle to adapt to major differences.
- Try using bright coloured post stick notes as reminders—very clearly written and well placed ones can prove to be so valuable, with messages stuck on the inside of the front door like **'don't forget your door keys'** or **'have you remembered to turn off the taps'**.
- Consider using a clock that has the day of the week, date and time displayed, and images of a sun or a moon to show whether it is day or night time.
- Remember large mirrors can be frightening to a person with dementia, as the reflection they see will not be the person they remember.
- Finally, patterned curtains and carpets can be confusing, as a person with dementia may see images, for example faces, in the shapes. The carpet may look like uneven ground or even look like a big hole.
- Please think very carefully before you change things and if you do, then consider replacing them with a design that has no big patterns.



If you have a computer please take a look at our website which covers all MASE activities: www.themasegroup.com

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