

MASE Monthly Newsletter - February 2018



Proud Recipients of Queen's Award for Voluntary Service and British Citizen Award

A Special Note for MASE Carers

Over the past two months sadly we have lost many of our MASE people; we know many Carers have gone through a really difficult time and are probably wondering just what the future will hold for them.

In our Newsletter this month we are going to cover Social Isolation. The MASE Trustees want to reassure all Carers you will always be welcome at our Groups. The knowledge, care and empathy you have given to your cared-for over the years, will be so valuable to people who are starting out on the dementia journey. Do not, for one minute, think that you will be pushed aside now – believe us when we say you are essential to our groups and will always remain a part of them.



Remember: Social isolation can be an issue for individuals of any age through many different circumstances.

- In the UK, only 17% of older people are in contact with family, friends and neighbours less than once a week, and 11% in contact less than once a month.
- Loneliness is common in Carers, especially Resident carers. Other groups at risk of loneliness include Carers who have lost their loved ones, those living in sheltered housing or residential care and older people who emigrated from other countries (especially those who do not speak the language well).
- Loneliness seems to be less prevalent in those rural areas where a sense of community still remains – more so than it is in more densely populated urban areas.
- Lack of money limits the opportunities for overcoming loneliness: those on lower incomes are more prone to feelings of loneliness than those who are better off. may differ by age group.

Yes, you will go through phases of guilt, questioning yourself 'did I do enough during the time we were together; could I have kept my loved one at home, rather than putting them into care'. These are normal thoughts – but each of you know that whatever decision was taken, it came from your heart and with the sole intention that your loved one would be cared for properly, and kept safe. We need to stress to all our Carers, be they past or present, you are doing, or have done, a FANTASTIC job over the years.

You have all been on a long and difficult journey and you have all been incredible.

Please now give yourselves the credit you deserve.

Please Carers be Prepared!



We are all culprits of saying '**it won't happen to me**', but unfortunately occasionally things **DO** happen and it is always better to be prepared, than to be rushing around at the last minute trying to get things organised. In view of the long waits that people are currently experiencing when waiting at A&E departments it is imperative that you stay one step ahead of any unexpected eventualities .

1. At home always keep a small bag packed, and keep it in a safe place. In it put some personal items just in case of an emergency. If your loved one is then taken by ambulance into hospital, you will not be trying to get things together at the last minute.
2. Put in a small bottle of water and perhaps a packet of biscuits/or a bar of chocolate: things which could prove invaluable during your wait.
3. A magazine, or a book (in case you are there for a while).
4. A purse with some change so that you can at least buy a drink and also if you need to get back home you can always call a taxi.
5. A small packet of baby wipes - which can be used to refresh both Carer and cared for.
6. A few small packs of tissues and perhaps even some peppermints/boiled sweets.
7. Also keep in the bag a note of any allergies or medication that is being taken - be it for you as the Carer, or for your cared for. Perhaps even a small box with overnight medication for yourself if you have to remain at the hospital for any length of time. This will be invaluable to a Paramedic/Nurse or Doctor if a person has to go into hospital.

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

Things NOT to say to someone with Dementia

1. 'Remember when...?'

While it can be tempting to try and jog the memory of somebody living with dementia, this kind of question is often a reminder of memories lost. This can be a frustrating or painful experience, and there's also no evidence that training the brain in this way will help somebody hold on to memories. That's not to say you should avoid talking about the past, but it's better to lead the conversation and allow the person to join in.

Try this instead: Instead of posing a question, try leading with 'I remember when...' instead. That way the person can search their memory calmly without feeling embarrassed, then join in if they like.

2. 'I've just told you that'

Having to answer the same question several times can be frustrating, but repetition will happen. There is little benefit to passing on your frustration to somebody with dementia, and saying 'I've just told you that' only reminds the person of their condition.

Try this instead: Try to be polite and as patient as possible. It's important for somebody with dementia to feel they're being listened to and understood.

3. 'Your brother died 10 years ago'

A person living with dementia may forget about a past bereavement or ask for somebody who has passed away.

But reminding them of a loved one's death can be painful, even causing them to relive the grief they've already experienced. How carers should respond to this may vary for different circumstances, but it's always good to show sensitivity.

Try this instead: It may be better to come up with another reason for somebody's absence, while at other times a gentle reminder is appropriate. In the later stages of dementia, trying to remind them that the person has died is unlikely to work and may be best avoided.

4. 'What did you do this morning?'

Avoid asking too many open-ended questions, as it could be stressful for a person with dementia if they can't remember the answer. While it might seem polite to ask somebody about their day, it's better to focus on what's happening in the present. It's also important that people with dementia continue to make personal choices, but defining the options might be a helpful technique.

Try this instead: Rather than 'what would you like to drink?', you could ask 'do you want tea or coffee?' or more simply, 'do you want a cup of tea?'

5. 'Do you recognise me?'

It can be distressing when somebody with dementia doesn't recognise you, but remember that the feeling is mutual. Asking the person if they know who you are can make them feel guilty if they don't remember, or offended if they do.

Try this instead: The way you greet somebody with dementia might change depending on the stage of their condition – judge for yourself, but keep it friendly. A warm hello could suffice, or it may help to say your name.

6. 'Let's have a cup of tea now, then after that we can go for nice walk and get lunch in that café you like in town.'

Long, complex sentences can be difficult to grasp for somebody with dementia. It's difficult to process several ideas at once as cognitive abilities slow down, so it's better to give directions or instructions one step at a time.

Try this instead: Use short, simple sentences as much as possible. Avoid speaking in loud environments and wait until you have the person's full attention before you start a conversation.

7. 'Do you need some help with that, love?'

Words like 'love', 'honey' and 'dear' can be patronising for people living with dementia. This is sometimes referred to as 'elderspeak' and can cause older people to feel infantilised.

Try this instead: Always remember the person behind the dementia, using their name as often as appropriate. This helps keep their dignity intact and aids concentration too.

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

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