

NINE THINGS TO HELP YOU COPE

1. **The desire not to think about what you are facing is normal but you can grow beyond it.**
Recognizing that this is a progressive, degenerative disease is painful. One of the biggest challenges you face is to accept what is happening.
2. **The process of this disease is unpredictable.**
Your loved one will lose functional ability. While change is inevitable, the time line will vary as to when your relative becomes a danger to himself or others. At these times you may need to make decisions for his/her safety.
3. **Your family member can still do many things.**
Celebrate and make the most of remaining abilities. Help them find enjoyment in the simple things that are still within their capacity. Provide them with as much dignity and control in their lives as possible within their own abilities and limitations.
4. **Your relative is doing the best s/he can.**
Challenging behavior is a result of their confusion and disorientation. He or she is not doing these things on purpose just to upset or get back at you. People with Alzheimer's disease cannot "just try harder" and it is not realistic to expect them to do what they used to do.
5. **Your emotional relationship with you family member will change.**
Established roles such as with a parent or spouse will change, but not reverse.
6. **Try to put yourself in the position of your relative.**
Imagine not being able to remember what you have done, or are supposed to do, or how to do even the simplest things. Recognize the insecurity the person must feel. Often s(he) may feel perfectly normal. Try to remember that sometimes their actions are reactions to your stress.
7. **You, not s/he will have to change.**
Your relative's ability to change is extremely limited and will diminish as the disease progresses. This means that you will have to learn to accept the behavior and learn how to alter your expectations and reactions.
8. **Beware of the grief that accompanies that process of loss.**
You may feel denial, anger, guilt and depression before you can accept what is happening. Seek the support of a trained counselor.
9. **Some families successfully care at home and many successfully place their family members under the care of others.**
Don't make promises you can't keep.