Duke Dementia Family Support Program

Caregiver Connections
An Educational Webinar Series With The Experts

The presentation will begin shortly.
Thank you for your patience!

dukefamily-support.org
919-660-7510
Making the Difficult Decisions in Dementia Care: Part 1

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MOVING A RELATIVE
& OTHER TRANSITIONS
IN DEMENTIA CARE

Laurie White
Beth Spencer

COPING WITH BEHAVIOR CHANGE IN DEMENTIA:
A Family Caregiver’s Guide

Beth Spencer & Laurie White
co-authors of Moving a Relative with Memory Loss
Every person with dementia is different.
Emotional & psychological experiences of individuals with dementia

• Many factors contribute
  • Prior personality
  • Type of dementia
  • Environment / lifestyle
  • Social support
  • How communication is handled
Emotional & psychological issues for family members

• Uncertainty in the face of unknown timetable & progression of symptoms
• Old relationship issues
  • With the person
  • With other family members
• Control issues
Emotional & psychological issues for family members

• Difficult value/belief conflicts
  • Within self
  • Among family members

• Grief, anger, fear, anxiety

• Growth, pride, love, caring

• Risk tolerance
Thinking about risks

• Risk tolerance: How much risk is comfortable for you? Example: driving

• Probability: How likely is it that something bad will occur with this risk?

• Severity of risk: How serious will it be if something bad happens?

• Risk of alternative options: Example: home versus nursing home
Making the tough decisions

• Gradual shift from joint to care partner
  • Continuing to involve person as much as possible
• Try to plan ahead
• Use “baby steps” if you can – that is, a little at a time
  • Example: medications
• Whenever possible include your relative in the decisions
• Think about how to give as much control as possible
Where trouble usually starts

Instrumental Activities of Daily Living (IADLs)
• Driving
• Managing money
• Paying bills
• Handling medications
Cognition (thinking abilities) & IADLs

- With progressive dementias, different cognitive areas may become impaired which can affect ability to do IADLs, such as:
  - Judgment & decision making – example: paying too much
  - Visuospatial abilities – example: reaching for a glass
  - Abstract thinking (meaning of signs & symbols) – example: time
  - Self assessment & insight: Insight vs. Denial
Insight

• Insight: Awareness of one’s illness & awareness of how it is affecting oneself
  • Self insight varies from person to person throughout life
  • Part of brain that provides insight may be damaged (not denial)
  • May be awareness of illness but not of how it is affecting self
**Denial**

- Denial: Refusal to face reality as a means of coping
  - Not always a bad thing
  - Can pose difficult challenges for families
  - Confronting with truth often fails
  - May be memory loss, not denial
Giving up the keys: Strategies

• Help the person with the emotional impact
  • Begin conversation early – involve the person
  • Have caregivers drive with the person
  • Talk about change and age
  • Help plan alternative transportation
Giving up the keys: Strategies

• Secretary of State Form (MI) - REQUEST FOR DRIVER EVALUATION

• Driver Evaluations

• Using authority figures (e.g., doctors, attorneys, financial planners)

• At the Crossroads booklet may be helpful.
  • [https://s0.hfdstatic.com/sites/the_hartford/files/at-the-crossroads-2012.pdf](https://s0.hfdstatic.com/sites/the_hartford/files/at-the-crossroads-2012.pdf)
  • Or google At the Crossroads Hartford
Medications

• Monitor ability to take safely
• Use systems or medication dispensers
• Ask doctor about eliminating / simplifying meds

• Baby steps!!
• If refusing meds, think about why
  • Try to give more control
Financial issues: Dangers

• Poor judgment – inappropriate spending
  • Gambling, giving $ away, being exploited, buying things that can’t afford

• Computers, door-to-door, mail, phone

• Financial abuse
  • By relatives
  • By strangers
Financial issues: Strategies

• DPOA (Durable Power of Attorney)
• Legal planning - trusts
• Representative Payeeship (Social Security)
• Automatic bill payment
• Guardian / Conservator – last resort
Financial issues: Strategies

• Mail – PO box; mail sent to someone else; fundraising donations discussion
• Bank accounts – Have several at different banks
• Credit cards – Prepaid limits; switch to debit card
• Phone – Do not call lists; turn off ringer, block international calls, change phone #
• Computers – Change email address; ramp up security; filters
Agenda, Part 2: June 22nd at 1:00 pm

• Activities of daily living (ADLs)

• Safety alone

• Moving decisions

• Health care & end of life decisions
Questions
Resources

• Dementiacarebooks.com

• At the Crossroads Hartford Foundation
  https://s0.hfdstatic.com/sites/the_hartford/files/at-the-crossroads-2012.pdf
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Thank you for joining us today!

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