

# THE EMPOWERED CAREGIVER SERIES

# SUPPORTING INDEPENDENCE

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An education program presented by the Alzheimer's Association®

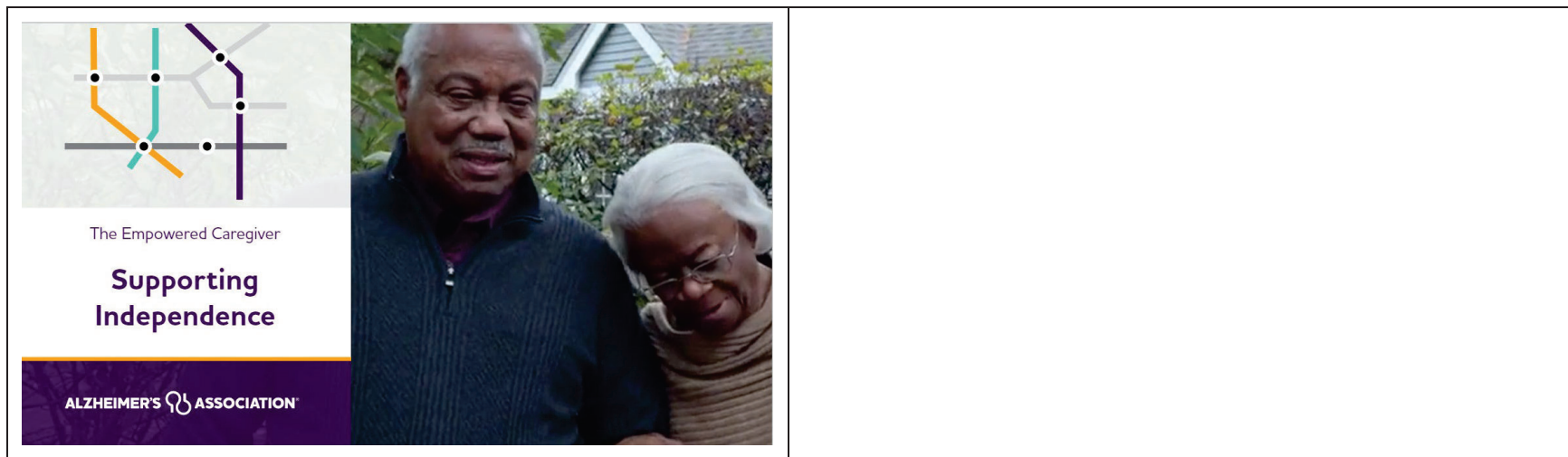


Participant's Guide

ALZHEIMER'S  ASSOCIATION®

# The Empowered Caregiver: Supporting Independence Participant's Guide

## Introduction





## The Empowered Caregiver



Building Foundations of Caregiving



**Supporting Independence**



Communicating Effectively



Responding to Dementia-Related Behaviors



Exploring Care and Support Services

### Learning Objectives

- Explain the changes in independence that happen in people living with Alzheimer's and other dementias.
- Describe the four steps for helping with personal care activities.
- List tips to help make activities meaningful.
- Identify ways to know what is the right amount of support.
- Describe how dementia affects safety.





## Introduction

- Most people living with dementia want to do as much as they can for themselves for as long as possible.
- As a caregiver, you likely know the person best.
- Knowing what is important to the person can help you keep them independent and safe.
- Try to include the person living with dementia in conversations about their support.



## Knowledge Check

All people living with dementia need the same amount of support.



True



False





**Each person living with dementia is unique.  
Everyone's level of independence will vary.**

#### **How Alzheimer's affects independence**

- Alzheimer's causes more damage to brain cells as the disease progresses.
- This makes it hard for a person to:
  - Follow instructions.
  - Move from one activity to the next.
  - Remember the steps to do a task.



**How can caregivers help maintain or maximize the person's independence?**

#### **Encourage independence**

- Focus on what the person **can** do instead of what they **can't**.
- Do tasks **with** the person instead of **for** the person.
- **Connect** with them instead of **correcting** them.





**How can caregivers help maintain or maximize the person's independence?**

**Assess and modify**

- Adjust your approach as the person's abilities change.
- As the disease progresses, break tasks into smaller steps. The person might need more time to do each step, or may not be able to finish all of them.

## Person-Centered Support for Activities



## Personal Care Activities

- In the early stage of Alzheimer's, a person is usually independent with activities like dressing, eating, using the toilet and bathing.
- They will need more support with these activities over time.
- You will need to adjust your support as the person's needs and abilities change.



## Four Ways to Support Personal Care Activities



- 1 Plan your approach.
- 2 Simplify the process.
- 3 Create the right environment.
- 4 Identify health issues.

## Four Ways to Support Personal Care Activities

1

### Plan your approach

- Think about the person's likes, dislikes and abilities.
- With each activity, treat the person with dignity and respect. Give them choices.
- Plan enough time to finish a task so the person does not feel rushed.



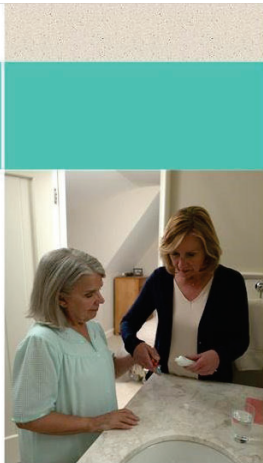


#### Four Ways to Support Personal Care Activities

2

#### Simplify the process

- Break the activity or task into smaller steps. Focus on one step at a time.
- Take out extra questions or steps that aren't necessary.
- Give simple instructions and encouragement to help the person feel successful.

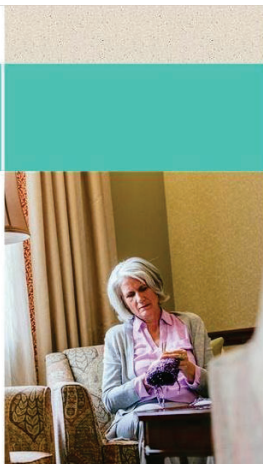


#### Four Ways to Support Personal Care Activities

3

#### Create the right environment

- Keep the area comfortable and free of distractions.
- Remove trip hazards so the person can safely walk around.
- The area should allow the person to have privacy.

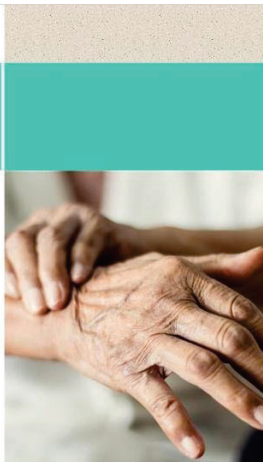


#### Four Ways to Support Personal Care Activities

4

#### Identify health issues

- See if the person is uncomfortable. They might have trouble sitting for a long time.
- They may have a skin condition like eczema, an infection or very dry skin that makes them feel sensitive to touch.
- Talk to a doctor if you notice any changes in the person's health.
- Make sure doctors and nurses know the person is living with dementia. Tell them if the person is taking any medications.



## Applying the Process



## Applying the Process

Strategies to support personal care activities



Bathing



Eating



Using the toilet

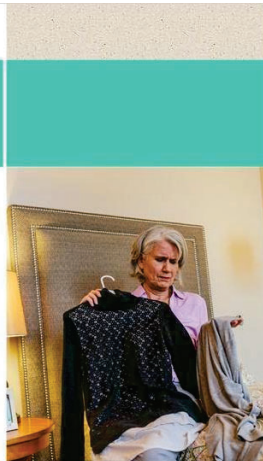


Dressing

## Dressing

### 1 Plan your approach

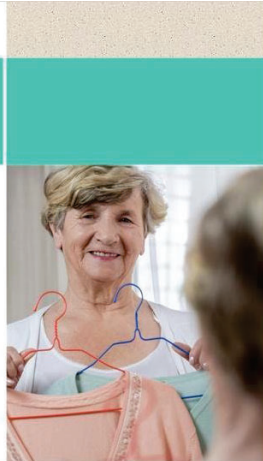
- Allow enough time so you don't have to rush.
- Respect the individual's personal style, including their likes and dislikes.
- See how much help they need. They may need help choosing the whole outfit or just one piece of clothing.



## Dressing

### 2 Simplify the process

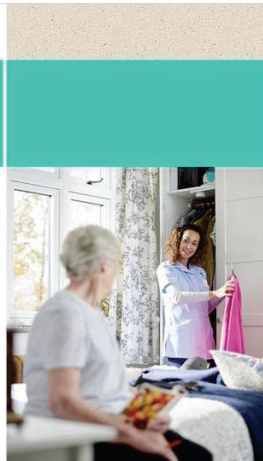
- Take off any dirty clothes as soon as possible. Remove them from the area.
- Offer two outfit options so they can choose one.
- Lay out the clothing in the order it should be put on.
- Use gentle physical prompts to help the person dress themselves.



## Dressing

### 3 Create the right environment

- Dress in a safe area.
- Help the person feel comfortable. For example, cover them while dressing.
- Choose a space that is private and comfortable.







Hear from a  
Caregiver

#### Putting It Into Practice - Dressing

Lucy's partner, Helen, is living with dementia. Helen usually sleeps late and, for the last several months, has been able to dress herself without any help. One day Lucy notices Helen is not wearing underwear or a bra under her clothes. The next morning, Lucy decides to just dress Helen herself so they can get out the door quickly.



### Putting It Into Practice - Dressing

How could Lucy have changed her approach to help Helen remain independent with dressing by providing just the right amount of support?

Select the best answer for each step:



Plan your approach

Simplify the process

Create the right environment

- ☐ 1. Each night, Lucy picks out an outfit with Helen and lays out the clothes for the next day to allow for more time in the morning.
- ☐ 2. Instead of letting Helen sleep in, Lucy wakes her up an hour earlier so she doesn't have to rush getting Helen dressed in the morning.

### Putting It Into Practice - Dressing

How could Lucy have changed her approach to help Helen remain independent with dressing by providing just the right amount of support?

Select the best answer for each step:



Plan your approach

Simplify the process

Create the right environment

- ☐ 1. Lucy dresses Helen each morning rather than allowing her to dress herself.
- ☐ 2. Lucy hands Helen one piece of clothing at a time, so Helen can dress herself.