

Learning from your loved with Alzheimer's and dementia!

You may be saying **"is Debbie crazy? She does not know what she is talking about, my loved one does not talk, what am I going to learn from them"**. Most everyone that are caring for a person with dementia, the one thing that you all have in common is, that your person experiences mood and personality changes, loss of communication, loss of ability to understand.

How do you think they will communicate with you, how will they get your attention. A person living with dementia will have behavior related issues, about 80%.

We'll think about how your children communicated before they began to talk, their behaviors, their actions, their body language got your attention and you began to understand what they wanted without any words. A person living with dementia will typically have a hard time communicating with the traditional form of communication, so what do they have to get your attention, mood and personality changes.

In my case Albert lost his ability to talk early on in his process, this was not only very frustration for him it was a huge loss for me and feeling very much alone.

Some of the behaviors you may see are:

- Frustration
- Depression, anxiety
- Isolation, lack of sociability, initiative to even do familiar hobbies,
- Cursing
- Irrational anger, yelling
- Aggression
- Suspicion, paranoia, Delusions, Confusion
- Wandering
- Hygiene changes

There are many things that can contribute to the behaviors but some of these changes are why families decide to seek professional assistance.

We may see behaviors when we try to correct or argue with them, ask too many questions, over stimulation in loud places or with too many people, tired, hot or cold, hungry, have to use the bathroom, new medications. The best course of action is to be flexible, adapt, listen and watch what they are doing; it is telling you the story. This comes with its own stress and anxiety for the caregiver and it is not a very easy thing to do.

For me once I admitted that I needed to start with a professional daycare for Albert, I followed their lead and kept a routine when I brought him home in the evening, I had control over my environment by doing the same thing over and over, so that he could adjust and feel safe, in control of what was going to happen. A person living with dementia is losing many senses and abilities, but the one sense that they will hold onto till the take their last breath is their feelings, how you make them feel, are they safe, do they trust you. So, in my case we arrived home, he got comfortable, got a snack (ice cream normally), and we sat on the couch so he could hold my hand and we watch one of three movies and within a short time he was looking at his watch and was ready to go to bed. We watched no news, no TV programs that was going to have him confused. As much as I did not want to watch the same movie over and over again or sit down when much had to be done before the start of a new day, it changes my environment for the better. He was telling me what he could handle.

One of the most effective things you can do for your person is to be the detective, know what their triggers are. Most of all in the late afternoon play some music that they like, this will keep them calm, it will be familiar to them and you may be caught dancing in the living room when you least expect it.

This is a person that is living with Alzheimer's and dementia, they are really not trying to give you a hard time, they are really having a hard time. Try to be compassionate towards your loved one and when it gets tough and all you see is the dementia take a break and come back again and see the person. You do not have to do this alone and in fact you should not do this alone, seek educational, support groups, respite. Someone once told me that you should not think of this as a sprint but it is more like a marathon. Start looking for your team and read the signs, your loved will help you on this journey, let them do that while they can.

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