

Long-Distance Caregiving:

Assessing & Addressing Family
Needs Across the Miles

Alzheimer Society
BRITISH COLUMBIA



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**Long-distance
Caregiver**



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Long-Distance Caregiving

- Levels of involvement
- Practical & emotional challenges
- Assessing needs
- Identifying resources
- Making the most of your visits
- Sharing responsibilities
- Staying in touch
- Moving

Levels of Involvement

sole person responsible



supporting on-site caregiver(s)

Practical Challenges

- distance
- cost
 - of travel
 - of providing alternate care
- time
- other family responsibilities
- work

Emotional Challenges

- dealing with grief
- feeling powerless
- being frustrated with ...
- feeling guilty

Assessing the Needs



Assessing the Needs

- Health
- Eating habits
- Safety
- Mental functioning
- Emotions
- Finances/legal
- Social life
- Daily living

Health

- new health problems
- worsening of prior health problems
- incontinence
- fainting
- declining vision/hearing
- change in sleep habits



Health

- poor hygiene
- unsanitary living conditions
- excessive use of alcohol/medication
- difficulty managing medications
- not keeping medical appointments

Eating Habits

- irregular/forgetting to eat
- unhealthy/unsafe
- difficulty swallowing
- no appetite/weight loss
- rapid weight gain

Safety

- falls/slippery floor surfaces
- unsteady in the bath/shower
- difficulty transferring from toilet/chair
- frequent burns or bruises
- electrical hazards in the house

Safety

- leaves appliances on
- wanders outside the house
- leaves doors unlocked
- locks himself out of the house
- unsafe driving

Mental Functioning

- poor judgement
- mental confusion
- inappropriate behaviour
- hallucinations/paranoia
- disorientation
- increased memory loss
- difficulty finding words

Emotions

- depression/sadness/crying
- frequent anger
- fearfulness
- withdrawal/isolation

Finances/Legal

- unsafe with money/hides money
- mismanages finances
- vulnerable to scams
- Power of Attorney, etc.

Social Life

- isolation
- loss of social skills
- loss of interest in hobbies

Daily Living

- shopping
- accessing transportation
- cooking meals
- hygiene
- cleaning the house/laundry

Identifying Local Resources



Local Resources

Service	Contact	Phone/email	Hours	Notes
MEALS				
Meals on Wheels	Steve	(250) 000-0000 www.mealsws.com	M-F: 9-6 pm S-S: 1-5pm	menu on line
TRANSPORTATION				
HandyDart	Jenna	(250) 222-2222 www.handydd.com	8 – 6 pm	2 days advance booking

Local Resources

- Alzheimer Society
- local community health units
- internet
- local phone book
- “little black book”



Local Resources

- day program
- meal delivery services
- private homemakers
- transportation options
- Letter Carrier's Alert

Local Resources

- directory of seniors' services, community services and programs
- libraries
- people living in the community
- possible use of technology

Local Resources

- develop relationships
- express gratitude
- address confidentiality issues

Making the Most of Your Visit



Visiting

- plan your appointments ahead of time
- research local services
- plan with the person with dementia
- reassess the person's needs
- make a list of
 - medication
 - emergency #s
 - contact #s

Sharing Responsibilities



Sharing Responsibilities

- family members
- friends and neighbours in the community
- service agencies, contractors
- non-profit agencies, social clubs, religious groups, volunteer organizations
- key people in the person's care; social workers, doctors

Staying in Touch, by . . .

- meeting contacts face-to-face
- setting up a routine
- appreciating the others in the network
- supporting each other
- respecting everyone's contribution
- COMMUNICATING!

Staying in Touch with the Person with Dementia

- telephone
- letters and postcards
- tapes of messages and songs
- email
- Skype
- and???



Moving



Moving the Person

- to your home
- to your area, but his/her own place
- to some kind of facility

Moving the Person

Pros:

- being there
- better support
- safety
- save money
- peace of mind

Moving the Person

Cons:

- leaving familiar place
- stress
- hands-on caregiving
- effect on your family
- qualifying time for service
- availability of care

Should YOU Move?

- practical considerations
- resentment ?
- effect on current caregivers
- relief of guilt
- short term vs. long term

REMEMBER!

- Plan early
- Assess the needs of the person
- Involve the person with dementia as much as possible
- Identify local resources
- Collaborate, develop relationships

REMEMBER!

- Make the most of your visits
- Be flexible, compromise
- Share responsibility
- Be realistic
- Maintain a support system
- Go easy on yourself!



Helpful Websites

- www.nia.nih.gov/HealthInformation/Publications/LongDistanceCaregiving
- www.howtocare.com/caregiving.htm
- www.caregiver.org/caregiver/jsp/content/pdfs/op_2003_long_distance_handbook.pdf

