

Alzheimer Society of Canada, *Alzheimer Journey: Understanding Alzheimer Disease: The Link Between Brain and Behaviour, Module 4*. Toronto: Alzheimer Society of Canada, 2002.

Alzheimer Society of Canada. *Guidelines for Care*. Toronto: Alzheimer Society of Canada, 1992. ISBN 0-9695301-2-9. Alzheimer Society of Canada. *A Personal Care Book*. Toronto: Alzheimer Society of Canada, 1993.

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Family Support for One who has Alzheimer's

Working your way through – the fears and frustrations of watching a loved one slip into the fog of Alzheimer's this pamphlet will explore the worst of the fears and offer support.

Learn everything there is to know – taking a hard look at Alzheimer's is terrifying. Knowledge is power and understanding will enable one to better respond to the needs of the person you love. A little insight into their frustration will help you be more understanding and helpful. Speak to your doctor, ask for material to read, contact your local Alzheimer's Association and join a support group.

Hold a family conference – if possible schedule a meeting together with the doctor. Discuss dividing the burden of care. Decide together who will be the **primary caregiver** and how others will assist – perhaps managing the finances, researching community resources, or driving your loved one to appointments when needed.

Put in place a back-up plan in order for the primary caregiver to have a break.

Determine who has the final say when difficult decisions must be made and how everyone will be kept informed.

Make room for grief – learn to vent your anger, frustration and sense of loss in a positive way without damage to yourself, your loved one or extended family. Learn to talk honestly about your feelings.

Plan ahead – ensure that a copy of a Will, and all financial records are in order and accessible. Ensure that someone has Enduring Power of Attorney and is able to make life-and-death health care decisions.

Get support – don't hesitate to ask for the soft shoulder and listening ear from your friends or spiritual leaders.

Simplify – buttons, zippers and laces become impossible to work with for our loved ones with Alzheimer's – replace zippers and buttons with Velcro and slip on shoes. Support this change by purchasing birthday and Christmas and Anniversary gifts of clothing or shoes or slippers that make this life change easier for your loved one.

Accept your loved one as they are – affirm your love, respect their dignity, and respect their feelings of sorrow and frustration – try to react to the outburst with patience.

Take care of yourself – see that you eat well and get enough rest. Remember it is impossible to care for others if we do not care for ourselves. Francis McNutt has said, "Even God cannot play on a broken violin!" Be patient with yourself and don't demand perfection, and never lose your sense of humour.

Stay in touch – all of us thrive on affection. Keep in touch; hold fast to your memories of better times. The capacity for enjoyment still exists. Feed it with simple things like a walk, a sunset, a piece of music, a favourite meal.

Keep the faith – whatever your faith tradition may be – for love is greater than any cruel disease. Love outlasts all of the struggles that this world may throw at us, even death or the passing over and going home of a loved one.

Resources –

From the Alzheimer Society of Canada

Alzheimer Society of Canada. *Alzheimer Journey: The Road Ahead, Module 1*. Toronto: Alzheimer Society of Canada, 1998.

Alzheimer Society of Canada. *Alzheimer Journey: On the Road, Module 2*. Toronto: Alzheimer Society of Canada, 1998.

Alzheimer Society of Canada. *Alzheimer Journey: At the Crossroads, Module 3*. Toronto: Alzheimer Society of Canada, 1998.