

Offering Support

Dr. John Dunlop, a physician specializing in geriatrics and author of *Finding Grace in the Face of Dementia*, offers a number of suggestions for people as they support and care for a person with dementia or Alzheimer's.

Ways to Help

- **Give the gift of your time.** Struggles with memory, finding the words and, at later stages of the illness, the ability to speak may result in loneliness and isolation. Being present is one of the more significant gifts we can provide a person with dementia.
- **Focus on the person.** As a person loses abilities and functioning, it is often easy to forget they are a person with needs, abilities and potential. We must strive to see the person, not the disease.
- **Learn to communicate.** Caregivers must adjust the way they communicate according to the progression of the disease. The goal is to help a person feel connected and cared for. Avoid correcting and arguing and find things they enjoy talking about.
- **Respect their autonomy and dignity.** Allow the person to make as many decisions and live as independently as possible, while also protecting them from making mistakes that would discredit their dignity or reputation, or cause harm.
- **Help them find meaning.** Help the person find meaningful activities that help them to feel they are making a contribution. Remind them how much they mean to you through a smile, hug or expressing gratitude for their contributions in your life.

About Urban Alliance

Urban Alliance is a Christian collective impact organization located in East Hartford, CT. Our goal is to create opportunities for people to achieve lasting change in their lives through the collaborative work of churches and organizations in our local community.

Your support helps mental health resources, like this brochure, get into the hands of the people who need them most.



Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias



If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease

Today, an estimated 47 million people worldwide have dementia, including more than 5 million Americans. Dementia is a general term for a decline in mental ability severe enough to interfere with daily life. Memory loss is often one of the first noticeable symptoms.

Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia, which leads to changes in memory, thinking and behavior. Many people are impacted by Alzheimer's and dementia, but help and support are available.

Ten Signs of Alzheimer's or Other Dementias

1. **Memory loss that disrupts daily life.** Forgetting recently learned information, important dates or events, asking for the same information over and over and increasingly needing to rely on memory aids.
2. **Challenges in planning or solving problems.** Changes in ability to follow or develop a plan or work with numbers. This may result in difficulties with finances or cooking.
3. **Difficulty completing familiar tasks.** Difficulty with daily tasks such as driving to a familiar location or completing familiar tasks at work.
4. **Confusion with time and place.** Losing track of dates, seasons and the passage of time; forgetting where they are or how they got there.
5. **Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships.** Difficulty reading, judging distance or determining color contrast. This may make driving difficult.
6. **New problems with words while speaking or writing.** Difficulty following conversations; struggling to find the right words or stopping in the middle of a conversation and not knowing how to continue.
7. **Misplacing things.** Losing things, putting them in unusual places, losing the ability to retrace steps.
8. **Decreased or poor judgment.** Changes in judgment or decision making; using poor judgment in spending money or struggling with hygiene.
9. **Withdrawn from work or social activities.** Withdrawing from activities that were previously enjoyed.
10. **Changes in mood or personality.** Mood and personality changes; becoming confused, anxious, irritated, suspicious, depressed or fearful.

Taken from Alzheimer's Association, *10 Signs of Alzheimer's Disease*. For more information about the symptoms of Alzheimer's, visit alz.org/10signs. If you or someone you know is experiencing some of these symptoms, the next step is to discuss them with a primary care physician.

When the Diagnosis is Alzheimer's or Dementia

The following suggestions may be helpful for both persons diagnosed with Alzheimer's or dementia as well as their caregivers.

Educate yourself about the disease. If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's or dementia, it is important to educate yourself about the disease, its progression and how you can live each day to the fullest. The Alzheimer's Association is an excellent resource. Through their website (www.alz.org), they provide important information for people with Alzheimer's and dementia and their caregivers, and a listing of local support groups and educational workshops. Additionally, they offer a 24/7 helpline (1.800.272.3900) to answer questions and point people to helpful resources.

Build a network of support. A diagnosis of Alzheimer's or dementia can be overwhelming and frightening. It is normal for both the person diagnosed and caregivers to feel a variety of emotions, including anger, depression, fear, isolation and loss. It is important to build in a network of support in the early stages of the disease so you have the support you need as the disease progresses. This network is often comprised of friends, family and professionals who offer medical, emotional, practical and spiritual support.

Enjoy each day. There is often the misconception that people with dementia will need to sacrifice activities that once gave them pleasure. Activities merely need to be adapted to the individual's current level of ability. Both the person diagnosed and their caregivers can continue to enjoy and find meaning in each day by taking care of their bodies, engaging in enjoyable activities, being social and staying connected to feelings.

Plan for the future. It is important to take the time to plan for the future. Putting legal, financial and safety plans in place during the early stages of the disease allows for both the caregiver and person with the diagnosis to participate in planning and decision making. For more detailed information on legal and financial planning, visit the Alzheimer's Associations website at alz.org/IHaveAlz or call 1.800.272.3900. For information on safety planning, visit alz.org/safety.

Look to God for comfort, peace, strength and hope. The diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or dementia often creates much uncertainty, fear and a deep sense of loss for everyone involved. It is important to share your thoughts and emotions with the Lord and allow Him to help and care for you. Through the journey of dementia, God wants you to know that He is present, offers comfort and peace, extends his grace during times of weakness and offers an eternal hope in His love and salvation.

Helpful Scripture

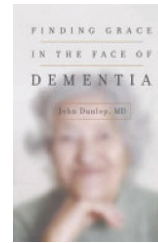
"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me." (Psalms 23:1-4)

"I lift up my eyes to the mountains-where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1-2)

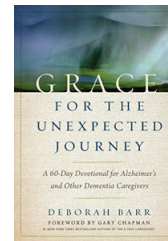
"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39)

"The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged." (Deuteronomy 31:8)

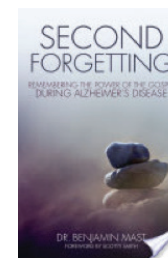
Helpful Resources



John Dunlop, MD
Finding Grace in the Face of Dementia



Deborah Barr
Grace for the Unexpected Journey



Dr. Benjamin T. Mast
Second Forgetting: Remembering the Power of the Gospel During Alzheimer's Disease

Building a Network of Support

Friends, family, pastors, care ministries, doctors, and support groups can offer practical, medical, emotional and spiritual support to the both persons diagnosed with Alzheimer's or dementia as well as their caregivers.

Alzheimer's Association

- The Alzheimer's Association is an excellent resource for reliable information, education, referral and support.
24/7 Helpline: 800.272.3900 or www.alz.org.
- The Alzheimer's Association Connecticut Chapter offers easy access to education programs, resources and services through their Community Resource Finder. Visit www.alz.org/ct to find support near you.

Senior Support

- CHOICES helps CT's seniors and individuals with disabilities understand their Medicare coverage and healthcare options and connect to needed community supports. Toll free within CT: 1.800.994.9422.
- MyPlaceCT.org is a free web-based resource designed to help older adults live at home or in the community with optimal independence, health, and well-being.

Find a Counselor

- Charisnetworkct.org offers a listing of CT professional Christian counselors.
- Psychologytoday.com offers a general listing of professional counselors.
- Urbanalliance.com/help offers a listing of CT behavioral health providers by county.



Immediate Support

- Mobile crisis teams visit people in their homes or in the community for crisis situations. Dial 211 and ask for Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services.
- National Suicide Hot line: Dial 988 for support.
- If you or a loved one are not safe, call 911 immediately or visit the nearest emergency room.