

Société Alzheimer Society
NOVA SCOTIA

10 Symptoms & Strategies

A GUIDE FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS



Introduction

The Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia is pleased to share with you a video of three remarkable women with early stage dementia. In this video series Anne, Faye and Sandra speak candidly about the symptoms they experience and the strategies they use to live well with dementia.

Accompanying the video is a guide available for family and friends, people with dementia and health care professionals. These guides are designed to encourage reflection and stimulate conversation, with the overall intention of providing education, sharing strategies, and reducing stigma. We hope these first voice videos will enhance supportive interactions in our communities.



Faye



Anne



Sandra

If you have any questions about the content of this document, the 10 symptoms and strategies, Alzheimer's disease and other dementias or the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia please contact:

Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia
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www.alzheimer.ca/ns



Reflection Questions for Family and Friends

1

Memory Loss that Affects Day to Day Abilities

Forgetting things often or struggling to retain new information.



Anne has difficulty remembering the many instructions following her doctor's appointments. She takes a notebook with her when she visits her family doctor. The doctor writes specific instructions for Anne to follow between appointments. This helps Anne remember.

Is there anything specific that you do to help cue your family member to remember information?

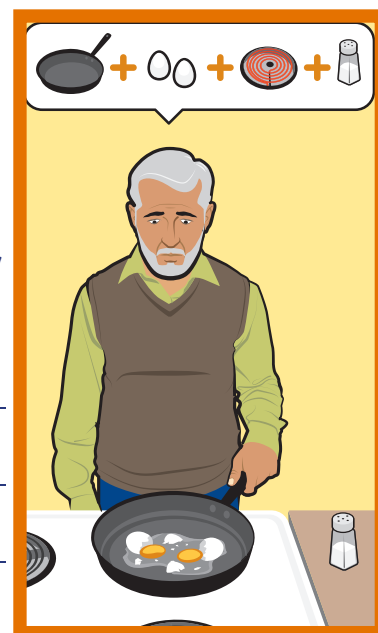
2

Difficulty Performing Familiar Tasks

Forgetting how to do something you've been doing your whole life, such as preparing a meal or getting dressed.

Sandra said preparing meals became more difficult because of the many distractions. Sandra was able to continue preparing her meals with the help of a Home Support Worker who came in twice a week to help her prepare meals and freeze them for the week.

What are some of the strategies you have adopted to support your family member to maintain their independence with day to day activities?



Reflection Questions for Family and Friends

3

Problems with Language

Forgetting words or substituting words that don't fit the context.



Sandra said it is difficult to follow a conversation if her friend goes off topic and sometimes has difficulty with word order. It is hard switching from one topic to another and at times Sandra feels lost. She uses humour to relax and communicate effectively.

If your family member appears to have difficulty finding a word, how do you support them in that moment?

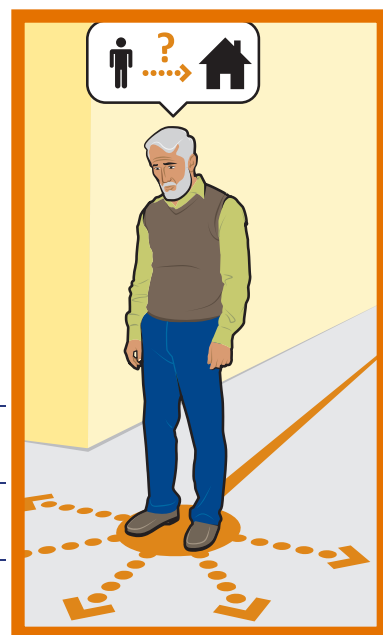
Disorientation with Time and Space

4

Not knowing what day of the week it is or getting lost in a familiar place.

Sandra mentioned she loves to walk and was getting lost in her own neighbourhood. She now uses either the GPS on her phone, or she calls her daughter who then uses the "Locate Me" app on her phone to help direct Sandra to where she needs to go.

Has your family member got lost in a familiar place like the mall or grocery store? If so, is there a strategy that you use to assist them to continue to be independent and safe in their community?



Reflection Questions for Family and Friends

5

Impaired Judgment

Not recognizing a medical problem that needs attention or wearing light clothing on a cold day.



Faye shared her example of impaired judgment while shopping. If she saw a sale item, she automatically purchased the item, even if she already had four toasters at home! Her daughter suggested waiting 24 hours to think about it, before purchasing. This pause helps Faye make better judgments when making purchases.

Have you noticed changes in your family member's judgment or ability to solve problems? What do you do to support your family member when they make inappropriate decisions or exhibit impaired judgment?

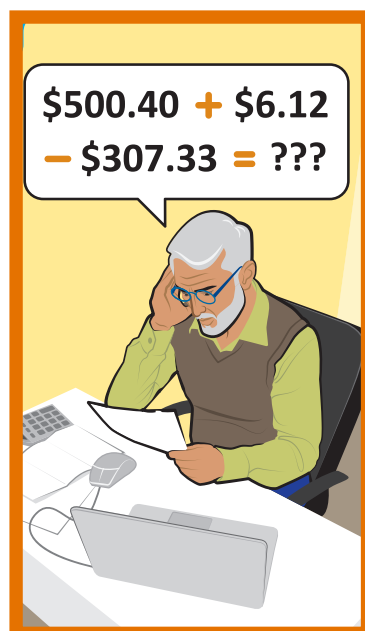
6

Problems with Abstract Thinking

Having difficulty balancing a cheque book, for example not understanding what numbers are and how they are used.

Anne explained how receiving a phone call from a friend to do something unplanned or spur of the moment often threw her off of her routine. It seemed too complicated. If however her friend was specific about the activity, ("Would you like to go to Tim's?"), Anne would be better prepared to say yes; the choice was simple and the place familiar.

Have you noticed your family member having difficulty with things more abstract like speaking on the telephone or perhaps understanding how to give the correct amount of money when purchasing items? How do you support your family member when abstract thinking poses challenges to everyday living?



Reflection Questions for Family and Friends

7

Misplacing Things

Putting things in strange places, like a dress in the refrigerator or a wristwatch in the sugar bowl.



To avoid losing things Anne has a bookcase in her front hall where she places everything including her purse, planner and notebook. She follows the same routine by always keeping important things here. This helps her to keep things organized.

What are some of the strategies you use when your family member misplaces an item?

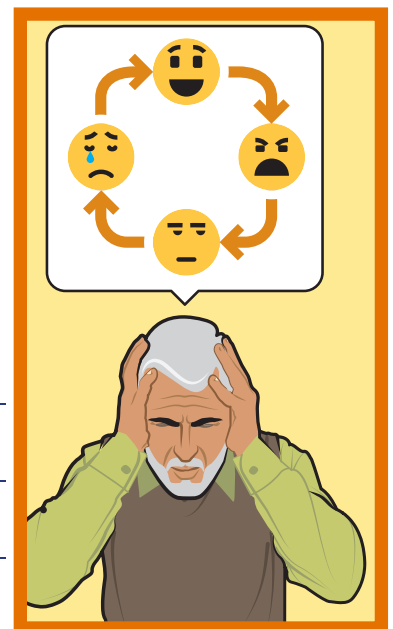
8

Changes in Mood and Behaviour

Exhibiting severe mood swings from being easy-going to quick tempered.

Anxiety is Faye's new little emoji that follows her around everywhere she goes. She had never been an anxious person and now she second guesses herself. She suggests taking a moment to step away from challenging situations and find calm in music, art, nature or your own spiritual place.

**Have you noticed changes in your family member's mood or behaviour?
What strategies do you use that help?**



Reflection Questions for Family and Friends



Changes in Personality

Behaving out of character such as becoming confused, suspicious or fearful.



Faye describes the change in her personality as a shock of electricity that hits her and she loses patience. This can happen sometimes when she experiences confusion if she is in a crowded room. She goes for a walk or into a new surrounding to have a break from the conversation to find her “Faye space”.

Are you aware of triggers that may contribute to a change in your family member’s personality? What are some of the triggers and what do you do to avoid them?



Loss of Initiative

Losing interest in friends, family and favourite activities.

Faye said her get up and go, got up and left. She was comfortable staying at home and doing nothing. She made a choice to make a concerted effort to stay engaged and move ahead with life. She would reward herself with special foods when she pushed through and demonstrated initiative.

Have you noticed a change in your family member’s desire to do things they once enjoyed? How can you ensure your family member continues to participate in meaningful activities that add to their sense of purpose and quality of life?



Where can I find these videos?

You can view all 10 videos on our website!

Visit **www.alzheimer.ca/ns/livingwell** to see the full playlist.

www.alzheimer.ca/ns