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**Step 10 Plan for the future**

Support the person living with dementia in planning for the future:

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Step 2 • Recognize that you may experience a variety of emotions

The news of the diagnosis and the changes it will bring may cause you to feel anger, denial, embarrassment, frustration, fear, sadness and/or guilt. These emotions are normal and common among families. Sometimes people get depressed. If your feelings are overwhelming and won’t go away, talk to your doctor.

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Step 3 • Learn about dementia

Learn as much as you can about dementia and providing care. Find out how dementia can affect a person, what changes you can expect, and how you can help to maintain their independence, dignity and quality of life. Share this information with the people closest to the person, such as other family members, friends and co-workers, to help them understand.

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Dementia progresses over time and will affect a person’s daily functions. Learn about the changes dementia can cause so that you have realistic expectations of the person’s abilities. Ask the person how you can help them stay independent and maintain a sense of some control. One tip often heard from caregivers is that, though it isn’t always easy, it helps to be patient. For more information, visit alzheimer.ca/ChangesInAbilities.

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No matter how dementia affects the individual, it is essential to treat them with dignity and respect. Although certain abilities may change, their emotions and feelings will remain, as will the need for companionship and a sense of belonging. Provide meaningful activities and interactions that bring a sense of joy.

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Currently, there is no cure for many types of dementia. But medications are available that may help with some of the symptoms. Discuss the risks and benefits with the person’s doctor. Your local Alzheimer Society will also have up-to-date information about new treatments that might be available through drug trials or therapy. If the person chooses to participate in research, you may be asked to help.

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While caring for a person living with dementia can be rewarding, caregivers are often at risk of physical and emotional problems. If you are the caregiver, make sure you maintain your physical health, stay active, maintain your social connections and make healthy food choices. Find time for activities you enjoy. See the brochure “Reducing caregiver stress” available from the Alzheimer Society or visit alzheimer.ca/ReducingCaregiverStress.

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