

After the Move: Visiting

Suggested Activities

Your visits are important

Visiting is a time to re-energize and reconnect with your family member/relative/friend who has a great need for love, companionship, exercise and interaction. Visits become easier and less stressful with time, and you will gradually relax. It is an ideal time to provide reassurance and support by responding positively, acknowledging feelings and saying such things as “everything is fine”, “You are in good hands”, “I am here” and “You are safe”.

Actively listening to your family member allows him* to share his concerns and enables you to find out what’s on his* mind. You can use this information to help him in the best way possible. Even if you have heard the story before, being a good listener allows the person to re-live memories or share current thoughts. Listen to feelings of frustration and anger; remain open and quietly sympathetic.

People with dementia have trouble understanding, reasoning, remembering, but they can still feel joy, anger, sadness, happiness, loneliness, boredom, feeling useful, or feeling useless. Just the acknowledgment of one’s feelings makes a positive connection.

Plan a schedule for visiting with family and friends

Consider:

- how often to visit
- how long to stay
- what activity you will do together

- what staff suggests
- what is the best time to visit for yourself and for the family member/relative/ friend

Suggestions for activities during visits

- assist with meals, drink, comfort
- share special treats, bring in something from the garden
- take your family member/relative/friend for walks or have a snack together at a favorite spot
- visit different parts of the Home: activity area, garden, lounge, dining room, library, etc.
- comb hair, stroke hair, massage hands, apply hand lotion, give backrub
- inform of daily news, family news, read newspapers, look through magazines and catalogues
- participate in an activity with your family member/relative/friend: craft activity, musical event, celebration, etc.
- enjoy music, pets
- decorate the room; bring in different furnishings or knick-knacks depending on the season; add pictures
- take care of certain things such as clothing and grooming items, toiletries, checking laundry needs, tidying up the room, putting clothes away
- watch a favorite TV program together, play cards, play favorite music. When your family member/relative/friend was at home, what did you enjoy doing together? Continue with these activities

- encourage your family member/relative/friend to lie down and rest while you read a book; enjoy the silence: silence can be a sharing and touching experience. Merely sitting, holding his* hand (if appropriate) and watching is good
- reminisce: look at photographs, bring in memorabilia, scrapbooks; create a life storyboard; laughter is contagious: try gently recalling humorous experiences you both shared
- children visiting can happen in many ways; just sitting with grandma or grandpa while you visit, coloring or working on a puzzle. The presence is the key and can have a very positive effect.

Length of visit

Watch for fatigue. Signs of tiredness could include repeating conversations, irritability, walking away from you or asking you to leave.

NOTE: It is fine to visit the Home every day for the first few weeks or so. There is a psychological assurance for both of you in this pattern. It also helps you to get to know the staff and see how the home works on a day to day basis.

Because this time also allows the staff to get to know your family member/relative/ friend, they may have questions for you.

Conclusion

Your family member/relative/friend will adjust gradually and feel “at home”, will receive the care he* needs, be safe, and you will have a new life and enjoy visits.

* For an easy read, throughout the handout, “he” or “him” is used to refer to a third person in a generic manner and without a sex differentiation.

Resources

Late stage and end of life care, Visiting in the late stage, Alzheimer care

Long term care, Visiting, Alzheimer care

A visit can be more than just a brief chat, Hilary Kemsley

Visiting a loved one in a long term care home; Making the most of your visit, Alzheimer Society of Ottawa and Renfrew County

Tips for visiting the person with Alzheimer disease, Forget-me-not Newsletter, Alzheimer Society of Southeast New Brunswick.

Top 10 Visiting tips, Alzheimer Society, Belleville-Hastings-Quinte

Visiting a loved one, Peter S. Silior, MSW, RSW

Further information on this topic

- *When Home is no Longer an Option*
www.alzheimer.ca/ottawa
- *Home to Retirement Home*
www.rgpeo.com/media

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