

One-on-One Individual Support **By: Shelby Downer, Client Support Coordinator**

At the Alzheimer Society, we have a variety of services available to connect our clients with information and support about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. These services include one-on-one individual support, support groups, education series, library resources, and volunteer-based programs such as the Friendly Visiting Program, and the Step Out Walking Club.

Many clients access ongoing support through one-on-one individual support with a Client Support Coordinator. The role of a Client Support Coordinator is to provide support and education to those with dementia, their family members, and their partners in care *throughout* the dementia journey. Client Support Coordinators provide individual support by connecting with clients through telephone, email, or in person through home or office visits. Client Support Coordinators can also advocate for their clients in the community, while supporting others in doing the same.

Ongoing individual support services are beneficial in many ways. Given the nature of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, we know that a series of changes lie ahead, for both the person with dementia, and their loved ones. In combination with our other services, our one-on-one individual support services help to strengthen our clients' support system by providing them with a contact point or "go-to" person when questions, uncertainty, or the need to talk through a concern arises. The topic of conversation or strategy discussed can be tailored to the *unique needs* and situations of the specific client. There is no "one size fits all" blueprint for living with dementia or caring for someone with dementia. Sometimes we need more time than groups allow for working through the finer details of how to support ourselves or a loved one. For those clients attending monthly support groups, individual support services are often still accessed when questions arise before the next group meeting.

During these conversations or visits, Client Support Coordinators provide support and education on a variety of topics. Some examples include:

- Understanding Alzheimer's disease and dementia, including symptoms and progression
- Understanding changes happening in the brain and developing coping strategies
- Building a circle of support
- Reducing stress
- Enhancing safety
- Healthy brain strategies
- Understanding options for care
- Considering Long Term Care
- Transitioning to Long Term Care
- Navigating the health care system and accessing community resources
- Advanced Care Planning
- Caregiver stress – emotions of caregiving

The Outcome

One-on-one individual support can have many different outcomes based on the need of the client. As a Client Support Coordinator, I find that many clients take comfort in knowing they have a neutral third party as part of their team. Outcomes vary, but from my experience, have included:

- An email conversation that clients can refer back to when they need a “refresher” or some encouragement
- A new piece of information or a resource with strategies to try from one day to the next
- A sense of relief, as sense of direction, a sense of both understanding and feeling understood
- An understanding of what normal behaviour is within the context of dementia and its progression
- Learning how to be an advocate for your own wellbeing and for that of your loved one
- As a caregiver, learning that it is okay to take time off for yourself, that it is okay to not tell the truth at time, and that it is okay to accept more help as care needs increase

We know that those who reach out and ask for help and accept support are more likely to learn the coping strategies and tools that they will need on a daily basis. Ongoing individual support may be your preferred method for staying connected with the Alzheimer Society. If you are interested in learning more about the Alzheimer Society one-on-one individual support services and would like to speak with a Client Support Coordinator, please contact our office location that is closest to you.

Peterborough Office Toll Free: 1-800-561-2588

Kawartha Lakes Office Toll Free: 1-800-765-0515