

## **Intimacy and Sexuality**

The progress of a Dementia, such as Alzheimer's disease will often cause changes in intimacy and sexuality for both the person living with a dementia and their spouse (partner, friend, etc.). The individual with the disease may become stressed by the changes in their memory and behaviour. Fear, worry, depression, anger and low self-esteem are common. The individual may regard their spouse as a caregiver, begin to cling to this person and may lose memories of their past life and how they feel about one another.

As a spouse (partner, friend, etc.) you may pull away from the individual in both an emotional and physical sense. As a spouse takes on more of a caregiving role, the idea of physical intimacy may become less appealing. This may be due to the stress of caregiving as well as the frustration felt by constant forgetfulness, repeated questions and other bothersome behaviours. As a spouse and a caregiver you will learn how to cope with these challenges but it is important to remember it takes time.

### ***How to Cope with Changes in Intimacy***

As do most people, people living with dementia need to feel that someone loves and cares about them. Your efforts to take care of these needs can help the person with dementia feel happy and safe. It is important to reassure the person that:

- ♥ You love him/her
- ♥ You will keep him/her safe
- ♥ Others care about him/her

The following tips may help you cope with your own needs:

- ♥ Talk with a doctor, social worker, or clergy member about these changes. It may feel awkward to talk about, but it can help.
- ♥ Talk about your concerns in a support group.
- ♥ Focus on the positive parts of the relationship
- ♥ Get more information. [http://www.alzheimer.ca/~media/Files/national/brochures-tough-issues/Tough\\_Issues\\_Intimacy\\_2007\\_e.pdf](http://www.alzheimer.ca/~media/Files/national/brochures-tough-issues/Tough_Issues_Intimacy_2007_e.pdf)

### ***How to Cope with Changes in Sexuality***

The well spouse or the person with dementia may lose interest in having sex. This change can make you feel lonely or frustrated.

- ♥ You may feel that it is not okay to have sex with someone who has dementia.
- ♥ You may feel that the person with dementia seems like a stranger.
- ♥ You may experience that person with dementia seem to forget that their spouse is there or even how to make love.