



In Care of You

A newsletter for Caregivers from Greene County Council on Aging

August 2022

Help with Sundowning

Individuals with dementia may get increasingly confused and/or anxious later in the day. Some may have disrupted sleep schedules or restlessness at night. Because this tends to happen in the late afternoon or evening, it's often called "sundowning." This may be demonstrated by getting angry or yelling, pacing, seeing or hearing things that aren't there, having mood swings, and/or asking repetitive questions.

Here are some suggestions to help reduce and manage sundowning symptoms:

1. Track their behavior and look for patterns

Pay special attention in the few hours before their sundowning usually starts. After a few days, you'll be able to see which activities, environments, or needs are triggering their behavior or making symptoms worse.

2. Make sure basic needs are taken care of

Sundowning is more likely to happen when someone is overly tired, in pain, needing to use the toilet, hungry or thirsty, bored, depressed or too hot or cold.

3. Minimize noise, distractions, and shadows

Feeling safe will reduce sundowning behavior that's triggered by overstimulation or fear. Turn



on plenty of lights to eliminate scary shadows or dark corners. Limit noise and distractions (turn off the TV, lower music volume, and don't have visitors over). Avoid upsetting or tiring activities like bathing.

4. Be mindful of your own stress level

People living with dementia are often more sensitive to body language and tone of voice. Picking up on your stress could lead to an increase in agitation and anxiety.

5. Establish a daily routine

Sticking to a regular routine reduces stress, increases the feeling of security, and improves sleep. Set regular times for waking up, meals, and going to sleep. Schedule appointments, outings, visitors, and bath time in the earlier part of the day, when they're likely to feel their best.



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Providing support for those who support others

What to do if you notice that a loved one is showing signs of dementia

Alzheimer's experts recommend these steps.

Write down what is causing concern: what is the person doing or not doing? What behaviors are you noticing?

What else might be going on with the person? Health issues, lifestyle, stress, medications?

Who else is noticing the changes that you are noticing? Talk with them in order to get a clearer picture.

Who should lead the conversation – who is the best person to do this? When and where should this take place? Have this semi-private conversation as soon as possible, at a time and in a place that will feel comfortable for the person such as their home.

What will you say? Rehearse what you will say and pay attention to your tone of voice and what it conveys. "I've noticed _____, and I am concerned. Have you noticed this? Are you worried?" "How have you been feeling lately? You haven't seemed like yourself." "I noticed that you _____ and it worries me. Has anything else like this happened?"

Ask the person to see a doctor and offer to go with the person to the appointment. "There are many things that can cause _____, lets see if a doctor can help. The sooner we know what is happening the sooner we can address it." "We'll both feel better after we talk to the doctor."

You may need to have more than one conversation with your loved one. Don't give up. Try to think of new ways to approach this important conversation.

Seek support from local resources: GCCOA, support groups, education programs.

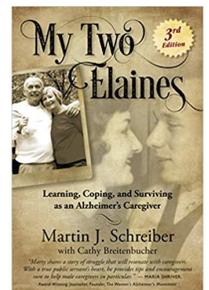
Caregiving is a constant learning experience.

— Vivian Frazier



Recommended Reading

Former governor of Wisconsin, Martin Schreiber, watches his beloved wife, Elaine, gradually transform from the Elaine he fell in love with in high school to the Elaine who knows she is declining and can't remember how to cook a meal, and finally to the Elaine who no longer recognizes Marty or their children. *My Two Elaines: Learning, Coping, and Surviving as an Alzheimer's Caregiver* By Martin J. Schreiber and Cathy Breitenbucher



GCCOA Resources for You

Support Groups

- 1st Tuesday of month at 11:30 pm, GCCOA main office
- 2nd & 4th Tuesdays at 9:30 am, Peace Lutheran Church, 3530 Dayton-Xenia Rd, Beavercreek
- Online support group on hiatus for summer. It will return in September

Weekly Radio Segment

Partners in Caregiving every Thursday soon after 6pm
WBZI—FM 100.3 AM 1500

We hope you enjoy this publication, and welcome your comments and ideas for future issues.
Let us know if you no longer wish to receive this newsletter.