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After the Alzheimer's Diagnosis: Practical Information for Family Caregivers



Daniel D. Sewell, MD

Professor of Clinical Psychiatry
Geropsychiatry Fellowship Program Director Emeritus
Medical Director
Senior Behavioral Health Program
University of California, San Diego



Disclosures

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 - PI: Philip Greiner, DNSc,RN, Director, School of Nursing, SDSU



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- **Other**

- Uncompensated roles with the following organizations:
 - President, American Association for Geriatric Psychiatry
 - Medical Advisory Board of the George G. Glenner Alzheimer's Family Centers, Inc.
 - Medical and Scientific Advisory Board of Alzheimer's San Diego
 - Medical Advisory Board of the San Diego Chapter of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill



Creating Successful Caregiver Teams



Creating Caregiving Teams

- How to create a successful caregiving team
 - Make a list of family members (and friends and neighbors) who are willing and able to help and what special skills and talents they possess
 - Give family members/friends specific tasks or assignments that, when possible, exploit their strengths and talents
 - Keep in mind that caring for a family member with Alzheimer's can be extremely stressful and that stress has a tendency to cause psychological regression
 - Anticipate that long-standing patterns of behavior and communication between family members may be intensified by the stress of the situation



Creating Caregiving Teams

- How to create a successful family caregiving team
 - Periodically solicit feedback and offer praise and thanks
 - Strive for open honest communication
 - Encourage all involved family members and friends to become as educated as possible about Alzheimer's, in general, and the strengths, weaknesses, preferences, needs and priorities of the afflicted family member in particular
 - Encourage (require?) caregivers to attend a course on how best to communicate with someone who has Alzheimer's
 - Encourage caregivers to attend support groups



Creating Caregiving Teams

- How to create a successful caregiving team
 - As much as possible, share the burden of caregiving with as many people as possible. This strategy helps protect any one caregiver from stress related illness or burn out.
 - Assign out-of-town individuals tasks that do not require them to be geographically close to the patient (e.g. using email to keep all those interested in the family member with Alzheimer's informed or designing and maintaining a phone tree for efficient communication)



Creating Caregiving Teams

- How to create a successful caregiving team
 - Do not hesitate to set limits if a caregiver is saying or doing things that hurt more than help.
 - Monitor each caregiver for signs of physical or psychiatric illness or burn out
 - Depending on the caregivers role, insist that each person has vacations from their caregiving duties
 - Establish clear lines of authority and communication



Effective Communication

- **Helpful hints**

- Make one request at a time
- Speak clearly and slowly
- Allow time for the patient to respond
- Maintain eye contact
- Assume a comfortable posture with arms and hands relaxed
- Identify the person's affect and verbalize this for him or her
- Time communications optimally based on circumstances (e.g. hunger, fatigue, background noise, etc.)
- Remember that even when words may no longer convey meaning volume, rate and melody of speech may still convey information