

Tips to Live Well with Dementia and Create a Dementia friendly Home

Dementia specialists, Helping Hands, share some simple tips on how to best support your loved one to live well with dementia, as well as ideas on how you can create a dementia-friendly home



Whether you and your loved one are coming to terms with a recent diagnosis of dementia, or you have started supporting someone who is living with dementia, we understand that it can be an incredibly tumultuous time with many unanswered questions. More people will be affected by dementia in some way and many families will be learning to live with the condition.

We understand that a diagnosis of dementia can often be an emotionally tolling time, for both the person living with the condition and those closest to them. Whilst there is currently no cure for dementia, there is plenty that you and your loved one can do to live well with the symptoms of dementia.

5 Top Tips for Living Well with Dementia

Alongside supporting your loved one with treatment as advised by their doctor, you can also help them with the following:

1. Create a routine, use timetables and other forms of scheduling to keep on top of everyday tasks and social events. You can help your loved one by purchasing a wall calendar. They may even benefit from small, frequent reminders like sticky notes around the home.
2. Make the home as dementia-friendly as possible. This can be as simple as helping your loved one declutter their home, or perhaps if you're wanting to redecorate, consider using contrasting colours and avoid patterns (see below).
3. Purchase a dosette box to keep on top of medications. These can also be useful for any vitamins and supplements your loved one might be taking.

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4. A healthy and varied diet is key to living well with dementia. As well as including lots of fruit and vegetables, try to encourage your loved one to drink plenty of fluids to stay hydrated. The urge to drink often changes with dementia, so leave glasses of water within reach and use visual cues such as post-it notes to remind them to drink fluids regularly.
5. Regular exercise and staying physically active is an important part of managing dementia symptoms. Why not accompany your loved one on a gentle stroll or help them try out some new chair exercises?

Creating a Dementia-friendly Home

There are many ways you can make your loved one's everyday routines easier, for example introducing memory aids around the home. These promote independence by reminding them how to perform tasks, or when they have appointments. You could try:

- Putting family photos around the house. This is a great way of gently reminding your loved one of treasured memories.
- In the kitchen, use a magnetic whiteboard on the fridge or a corkboard to write reminders on, such as doctor or dentist appointments.
- Put a list of important contact numbers by the phone, reminding them who to contact in an emergency or if they feel distressed.
- Use sticky notes for reminders around the home, such as 'wash your hands' in the bathroom, or to label appliances that are 'hot' or 'cold'.

If you're looking to redecorate your loved one's home, consider the following to ensure your plans are dementia friendly:

- When it comes to walls and flooring, try to choose one colour for the walls and another for the floor as this will help your loved one differentiate between the two. Although it may be tempting to pick a pretty design for the walls, it is best to avoid patterns when decorating for dementia; block colours are most suitable to avoid overstimulation.
- Contrasting colours are imperative to decorating for dementia and you can also consider tone - if both the walls and floor are light in colour, consider using a darker trim for the skirting to help emphasize the size of the room and to help your loved one establish doorways.
- Forward planning makes buying furniture and other large household items much easier, and it's always worth considering the impact that object might have: will it disrupt pathways? Is the design overstimulating? Does it stand out from the other objects in the room?
- Other details to consider when decorating for dementia are smaller items, such as crockery. Consider plates in a block colour that contrasts from the dining table, so that they stand out.
- A nightlight or low-lit lamp in the corridor can make going to the toilet at night easier, without causing disturbance to sleep.