

Here is a staggering fact: there are more than five million Americans with Alzheimer's disease and 75% of these individuals are cared for by friends and family. So, many of us need to find joy in the midst of the stress that accompanies care giving and the stress of daily life.

Jolene Brackey, author of Creating Moments of Joy* says, "We are not able to create a perfectly wonderful day with someone who has dementia, but it is absolutely attainable to create a perfectly wonderful moment; a moment that puts a smile on their face, a twinkle in their eye, or triggers a memory. Five minutes later, they won't remember what you did or said, but the feeling you left them with will linger."

For the person with Alzheimer's disease and short-term memory loss, life is made up of moments. With this progressing disease which robs of the present we must find ways to "tickle" those long-term memories to bring joy to the moment.



Here are some ideas:



1. Use music. Music evokes all kinds of memories. Play songs from their earlier life but take caution during meals when music can be distracting.
2. Live their reality. For example, accept the idea that your elderly husband believes he is 30 years old. In his reality, his wife is young and wrinkle-free. His children are in school. Arguing will not lead to moments of joy.
3. Feel ok about stretching the truth. You cannot reason with a person with Alzheimer's disease. For example: An 82 year old woman keeps trying to find her mother. It is cruel to tell her that her mother died years ago. Each time she hears this news, she will grieve her mother's death. You have robbed her of joy.
4. Communicate. 90% of what the Alzheimer's patient understands is non-verbal communication. Your mood becomes the patient's mood.
5. Touch with kindness and comfort.
6. Give limited choices. Too many choices lead to frustration.
7. Don't ask open ended questions, but try simple choices such as: "Would you like iced tea or lemonade with your lunch?"
8. Make a connection. Instead of starting a conversation with questions, say "Mrs. Jones, you look so pretty today. That blouse goes beautiful with your blue eyes." Joy!
9. Avoid arguments. Remember, the memory part of the Alzheimer's brain is damaged. They can no longer learn new things as the disease progresses. Arguing has no value and creates stress. Less stress = more joy!
10. Choose television shows with a happy, simple theme. Events on TV can be confusing to the person dealing with problems with reality.
11. Avoid fatigue if at all possible. Both caregivers and patients need at least one nap per day. Ask, "What were the sleeping habits of this person during his life"? Allow the person to wake on his own – meet his schedule not your own when possible.
12. SMILE. It lifts your spirits, relieves stress and maybe you will get your smile back.

F i n d i n g J O Y



* This book is available in our lending library!

Submitted by: Beckie Hinze, MBA, BSN, RN Accolade Home Care, Round Rock, Texas
(512) 238-6000 1611 Chisolm Trail #450, Round Rock, TX 78681

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