



Looking After Families and Care Partners - 01

TAKING A BREAK

This Help Sheet discusses the importance of taking a break from caring, how to organize it and who can help.

Taking a break is important for families and care partners

Caring for someone with dementia can be physically and emotionally tiring and stressful. Families and care partners can easily become isolated from social contacts, particularly if they are unable to leave the person they are caring for.

Regular breaks mean that you can have a rest, go out, attend to business or go on a holiday.

Taking a break is important for people with dementia

Most people take breaks of some sort, perhaps pursuing hobbies that they enjoy, or weekends and holidays away. This gives us something to look forward to and experiences to look back on. Breaks are important for the same reasons for people with dementia. It gives the person an opportunity to socialize and meet other people, and to get used to other people providing support and caring for them.

What stops families and care partners taking a break?

- Putting their own well-being last.
- Feeling that a break is not deserved.
- Not knowing what is available, or how to get help organizing a break.
- Being too tired to make the effort.
- Wanting a break, but the person being cared for doesn't.
- Feeling that it's all too much trouble.
- Believing that it is their responsibility to provide all the care, all the time.

How to take a break

There are lots of ways to take a break. It depends on what suits you and your family.

Breaks can be:

- Time for the person with dementia to enjoy themselves with new or familiar experiences.
- Time to relax and recharge in whatever way suits you.
- Taking time together away from the usual routines.

Other family members and friends may be happy to help out by giving you a break from caring. Often, it's just a matter of asking.

Look in your area for different types of respite programs for regular, occasional and emergency breaks. They include out of home respite, in home respite and residential respite. Respite can also be provided in local day activity centers by attending planned activity groups. Some centers offer specialized activities for people with dementia. The care offered by day centers ranges from a few hours to several days a week. Some centers offer extended hours, weekend or overnight care.



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Another way to take a break is to have a care worker come to the house to enable you to do things outside the house. They may also accompany the person with dementia to an activity that they enjoy. This is often called in-home respite as it begins and finishes at home.

Respite can also be used to provide care in an emergency, or arranged for a longer period of time in a residential facility.

Planning for a positive experience

It is common for people with dementia to find new environments and new people unsettling. Because of this it is important to plan ahead for a positive respite experience.

Many families and care partners have found it useful to start using regular respite as early as possible so that everyone can get used to sharing dementia care. It is often best to start with small breaks and build up to longer ones.

You will know best how far in advance to tell the person with dementia about the break. Reassure them if they are anxious and make sure that they know that you are positive about the break, even if you're feeling a little anxious yourself.

Talking with other families and care partners about ways they've managed to make respite a positive experience may give you some practical ideas for managing.

Ask for a break

- If you want to know more about how to take a break – just ask.
- If you need help planning what might suit you now, or in the future – just ask.
- If you just want to know what's available – just ask.

FURTHER INFORMATION: locally call Dementia Friendly Wyoming 307-461-7134 or visit our website <http://www.dwfsheridan.org> or The Sheridan Senior Center 307-672-2240. Nationally contact the Alzheimer's Association at 1-800-272-3900, or visit their website at <http://www.alz.org>.