

Alzheimer's Disease Especially for Caregivers Changes in Relationships*

Introduction

If you are a caregiver, you will experience changes in relationships with your loved one with Alzheimer's, family members and friends.

Relationships

You may find yourself taking on a new role in your relationship as your partner's memory declines. The person with Alzheimer's disease may no longer be able to perform certain tasks, such as balancing the checkbook, doing the taxes, handling financial and legal matters and doing certain household chores. Making important decisions on your own may feel overwhelming.

To be prepared for this role reversal, it is important that you locate financial and legal documents, such as life insurance policies, property deeds and retirement accounts, soon after your loved one is diagnosed. You may need to turn to family, friends, professionals or community resources for assistance.

Intimacy

You may be feeling enormous grief over the changes in your relationship. You are not selfish for experiencing these feelings. Given your partner's cognitive decline, you may no longer be able to have the same emotional or physical intimacy that you once shared.

It is typical that people with Alzheimer's disease experience changes in their sexual drive. Depression can cause a reduced interest in sex. Some caregivers report changes in sexual feelings toward their loved one as a result of providing daily caregiving tasks. A physical illness and reactions to medications can also reduce sexual desire.

Changes caused by the disease may cause the person with the disease to exhibit inappropriate behavior and an increased sexual drive. React to your partner with patience and gentleness. Give your loved one plenty of physical contact with hugs or holding hands. In many cases, he or she may simply be anxious and need reassurance through touch and gentle, loving communication.

***Source:** Alzheimer's Association

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