



Florida REACH Project

Resources for Enhancing Alzheimer's Caregiver Health

Prescription for Sadness or Depression

Specific Behavior:

Overall Goal of this Prescription:

Please remember that dealing with challenging behaviors can be stressful. The brief relaxation strategies will help you deal with stress when dealing with this challenge. In particular, we recommend using the signal breath technique immediately before you use the strategies suggested in this behavioral prescription.

Strategies for preventing a challenging behavior from occurring (try picking one thing and sticking with it for a few weeks):

- 1. Offer activities that he/she can do to feel useful.** *Remember that people with memory problems often wish to feel needed and useful. Activities will help the person feel like he/she is contributing something to the household.*
 - Find activities that will allow the person to feel as if he/she is helping or making a contribution. Some activities might be sorting and rolling socks, folding clean laundry or towels, sorting coins, sweeping or raking, or setting the table. Ask him/her to help you with these things, and be sure to say thank you for doing so.
 - Measure success by how much he/she enjoyed that activity, or by how useful he/she felt while doing the activity. It is not necessary that the person do the activity according to directions or the way that you would do it, but that he/she attempts the activity and feels good about it. For example, if the person always loved painting, it is not important that he/she paint within the lines as long as he/she is having fun.
- 2. Get the person involved with other people.** *Getting him/her involved in activities with others might provide a greater sense of meaning in life.*
 - There are a number of different kinds of activities in Central Florida, from choirs to art to theatre, going to the museum or lunches at the senior center. Ask your team for ideas and they can give you some suggestions to get started.
 - Consider having him/her attend adult daycare for a few hours each week. This might also be a time that you could get your exercising done.
- 3. Ensure your loved one's basic health needs are being taken care of** (including adequate sleep, nutritious meals every day, and exercise).



Other strategies:

Strategies for guiding how you respond during or after a behavior occurs:

- 1. Remember that CR's feelings are natural and that you did not "cause" them.** *It is not unusual for someone who has memory problems to feel frustrated and to realize that the situation is a burden for the caregiver. Extra work for the caregiver is indeed a fact of life when memory loss occurs. You cannot change the facts of the situation, but there are things you can do to help him/her deal with these feelings.*
 - When your loved one cries, remind yourself that his/her feelings are natural and it is OK for a person to cry.
 - Offer reassuring statements. For example, let the person know that you love him/her and that he/she is important to you.

- 2. Give the person opportunities to talk about feeling upset, frustrated, sad or depressed.** *Often people feel better once they have a chance to talk about what they are thinking and feeling.*
 - Listen to her and provide reassuring statements. Even just letting him/her talk for a few minutes can help.
 - Acknowledge that it may be hard to accept the fact that your loved one needs help and that he/she may feel badly about it. Reassure him/her that everybody needs help sometimes.
 - Refer to the fact that he/she has cared for or provided for others, and now it is time for others to care for him/her.
 - After allowing him/her to express and discuss feelings, provide your loved one with a positive activity or move on to a different subject. For example, try to distract him/her with a snack or some other activity that might change the focus of his/her thoughts.

- 3. Talk with the medical team about his/her mood, especially sadness.** *The team can evaluate your loved one for depression. Clinical depression is a physical condition for which medication is often very helpful.*

General Information:

You are a dedicated caregiver and you are doing a great job. We understand that this can be very upsetting to you and are committed to helping you with this challenge. We believe these strategies will help and look forward to working with you in the coming weeks.

Remember that you can reach out to the social workers on your medical team if you have any questions or concerns.