

Sunshine in Everyday Tasks

Activities of daily living including eating, showering, dressing, and changing clothes are a few areas which may trigger challenges and disruptions throughout your caring role. Through being mindful of how approaching the person living with dementia, it may become possible to turn negative experiences into effective and positive encounters.

Getting Things Done

Days are always busy, and it's not always possible to achieve your desired results. This can potentially create stress for both the carer and the person living with dementia. The following simple strategies may help bring sunshine into everyday activities.

- Help the person stay in control. The person living with dementia needs to feel that they still have some control over what is going on in their lives. Be mindful of not creating an experience that they may interpret as you taking over.
- Where possible try to see yourself as a care partner or carer, rather than an instructor.
- One way to help boost self-esteem, while getting things done is to ask for help in another area which they are better able to manage.
- Try to create an environment where you become a team.
- By using starter phrases, such as, '*I wonder if.....*' and '*What if.....?*' you are encouraging an opportunity for the person to make choices without having to articulate words.
- As dementia progresses the ability to sequence weakens, and the person becomes less able to follow more than one suggestion at a time. Explain the task one step at a time.
- Understanding cause and effect is a rational thinking tool which may not always work, e.g. the person living with dementia may not be able to understand that a saucepan left cooking could result in a fire.
- If getting clothes washed is an issue; one approach could be to set up a simple task, such as washing the dishes; and then say something like, '*I'll have to do these dishes later. I'm too tired now.*' There is a chance the person may step in and offer to help, then you could offer to wash their clothes as a special 'thank you'.
- If showering is becoming a challenge, you could ask the person to help fold some washing, and once that is completed (and you have sincerely thanked them), you could offer a nice pamper session in the shower with a hair wash and massage or a back scrub.

Any anxiety felt by the person living with dementia will linger on, even though they may not remember the cause. The key with all techniques is creativity and flexibility. What works in one situation may not be appropriate or successful in another. What is right for one person won't necessarily work for someone else. Just keep trying, with genuine respect and care, until you find the best approach for that person.