

Tips for living day to day

As a person living in the early stage of Alzheimer’s disease, coping skills for managing memory and other cognitive issues can help maintain quality of life. One of the most effective ways to develop coping strategies is to learn how others remain independent for as long as possible.

The following tips are from individuals living in the early stage of the disease:

Day-to-day tasks	Coping strategy
Managing medications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a pill box each night use the next day. • Ask your care partner or friend to remind you when to take your medications. • Set the alarm on your cell phone or schedule dosing around mealtimes. • Place a sticky note on a particular medication saying, “Do not take me” as a reminder it has already been taken.
Accepting changes in abilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize that some things may become more difficult for you to do. • Try to accept that these changes are out of your control and focus on the things you can still do.
Forgetting whether or not you have washed your hair when showering	After washing your hair, move the shampoo and conditioner bottles from one side of the shower to the other so you know the task is completed.
Difficulty writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use a computer, cell phone or tablet to write and send messages. • Have your care partner or friend assist in writing out checks or other paperwork before you sign them.
Remembering phone numbers	Program people's names, phone numbers and a picture of them, if possible, into your mobile phone.

Difficulty multitasking	Try to deal with tasks and distractions one at a time rather than all at once.
Maintaining a schedule/routine	Coping strategy
Remembering daily tasks/managing a to-do list	Use a monthly calendar with hour-by-hour scheduling to plan and execute your to-do list.
Planning for the day ahead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a note each night listing your plans with times for the next day. • Create and review the next day's itinerary before bed. Leave your schedule near the bed so you can review it in the morning. • Use an alarm clock to wake up early each day and build in time as a buffer.
Forgetting an appointment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the person/organization, explain what happened and offer to reschedule. • Reschedule appointments and devote the rest of the day to doing what you enjoy.
Driving	Coping strategy
Preparing to retire from driving	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage in an ongoing conversation with your care partner about driving retirement. • Sit in the passenger seat as a way to get used to not being the driver. • Take other forms of transportation or ask your care partner, family or friends to drive you.
Fatigue	Coping strategy
Unable to focus late in the day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work on tasks that require mental alertness during the early morning hours.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule events and travel earlier in the day. • Learn to recognize feelings of discomfort that occur later in the day. • Take a nap at the same time every day. • Build more sleep time into your night schedule.
Changes in relationships	Coping strategy
Frustrations with care partner or those close to you	Try to remember they did not ask to be put in this situation either and that they have their own fears and frustrations. Work together to make the situation better.
Longtime friends shy away	Your best and true friends will stay with you. Invest your time and energy in them.
Feeling like others have limited awareness of my feelings or how certain actions affect me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be open with others. Ensure that your care partner and friends are just as informed as you are about the disease and its impact. • Inform the other person about what they did and how it made you feel.
Feeling like my input is not valued or opportunities for input are limited and overlooked	Ongoing communication is important. Find balance/middle ground with your care partner and others by asking to be involved in conversations.
Managing stress	Coping strategy
Difficulty completing tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walk away from a task or a difficult situation before your stress level increases. If something is not going well, don't force it — try again later. • Take a break and evaluate the situation. This may help you find a solution. • Stop and do something you enjoy.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Don't put too much pressure on yourself. Returning to the task or situation later may bring better results.
Reducing stress	Regular physical activity, such as gardening, walking or practicing yoga, can help reduce stress.
Excessive stimulation when in large groups or overcrowded places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Narrow your field of vision as much as possible and block out surrounding noise. Ear plugs may help. • Shop for groceries early in the morning on weekdays when supermarkets are less crowded.
Fear of becoming separated from your care partner/friend or being alone in crowded areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wear the same color shirt as your care partner/friend when going out in public. You can look for the color of their shirt if you become anxious or can't find him or her. • Keep your mobile phone with you at all times to help you feel comfortable in public and while alone. • Program your mobile phone with In Case of Emergency contacts.
Stigma of the disease	Coping strategy
Facing stigma of being treated differently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be patient and polite and reassure others that you are still the same person. • Tell your story — it can change the way others view Alzheimer's and those who are living with the disease. • Try not to internalize other people's reactions.
When people talk to my care partner rather than speaking directly to me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have your care partner facilitate an introduction to you. This will demonstrate you are capable of answering questions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make your presence known and talk directly to the person. This will encourage others to speak directly to you.
Stigma of Alzheimer's as only an older person's disease	Educate others about younger-onset Alzheimer's.
Emotional health	Coping strategy
Rapid changes in mood or short temper	Be mindful of negative responses. Understand that your reaction is caused by the disease.
Guilt	Clarify why you feel this way. Seek out allies and friends for their input. Guilt is often self-imposed.
Any aspect of this disease	Try not to focus on what you don't have or what you have lost. Enjoy the moment.

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