10 ways to help a family living with Alzheimer’s

Re-Membering Matters at Mille Lacs ACT on Alzheimer’s action team is bringing awareness and education to northern Mille Lacs communities regarding Alzheimer’s disease through community presentations and Dementia Friends training. However, it is also important to understand how we as a community can come together and reach out to support those families living and caring for someone with Alzheimer’s disease. The Alzheimer’s Association outlines 10 ways to help a family living with Alzheimer’s disease. Here is the Alzheimer’s Association’s list of ideas.

1. Educate yourself about Alzheimer’s disease. Learn about its effects and how to respond.

2. Stay in touch. A card, a call or visit means a lot and shows you care.

3. Be patient. Adjusting to an Alzheimer’s diagnosis is an ongoing process and each person reacts differently.

4. Offer a shoulder to lean on. The disease can create stress for the entire family. Simply offering your support and friendship is helpful.

5. Engage the person with dementia in conversation. It’s important to involve the person in conversation even when his or her ability to participate becomes more limited.

6. Offer assistance to help family tackle its to-do list. Prepare a meal, run an errand or provide a ride.

7. Engage family members in activities. Invite them to go on a walk or participate in other activities.

8. Offer family members a reprieve. Spend time with the person with dementia so family members can go out alone or visit with friends.

9. Be flexible. Don’t get frustrated if your offer for support is not accepted immediately. The family may need time to assess its needs.

10. Get involved with the Alzheimer’s Association. Show your support by becoming an advocate by participating in “Walk to End Alzheimer’s” and “The Longest Day”.

Understanding is the first step to helping.

People living in the early stage of Alzheimer’s would like you to know:

- I’m still the same person I was before my diagnosis.
- My independence is important to me; ask me what I’m still comfortable doing and what I may need help with.
- It’s important that I stay engaged. Invite me to do activities that we both enjoy.
- Don’t make assumptions about me because of my diagnosis. Alzheimer’s affects each person differently.
- Take time to ask me how I’m doing. I’m living with a disease, just like cancer or heart disease.
• I can still engage in meaningful conversation. Talk directly to me if you want to know how I am.
• Don’t pull away. It’s OK if you don’t know what to do or say. Your friendship and support are important to me.

Family members would like you to know:
• We need time to adjust to the diagnosis.
• We want to remain connected with others.
• We need time for ourselves.
• We appreciate the small gestures


For more information on Alzheimer’s, resources, and caregiver support, visit the Alzheimer’s Association website at www.alz.org.

For more information about Re-Membering Matters at Mille Lacs ACT on Alzheimer’s and becoming involved contact Kathy Young at 320-676-1050.