



Relationships help us build identity and connections. As dementia progresses, you might notice changes in your relationships. These changes might occur between you and the person living with dementia. You might also see changes in relationships with family members or friends. You may be wondering whether this is normal and how to approach these changes.

## Common Changes In Relationships:

### Role reversal:

You may be taking on responsibilities that you never had before. If you are caring for a spouse, you may take on more household tasks. If you are caring for a sibling, you may take on a parental role. You may also find yourself caring for someone who normally cares for you. This might be a parent or parental figure in your life.

Role reversal can occur slowly and sometimes leads to social isolation and fatigue. Yet, a new role can also bring new meaning to your relationships. New bonds may form between you and the person with dementia.

### Sharing the care:

You may need to work with others to accomplish caregiving tasks and make health care decisions. Feelings of resentment can occur if responsibilities are unequal. A balance may be challenging if you or others live far away. However, sharing the caregiving role can invite new opportunities for communication. It can be a chance to build a strong supports for you and the person living with dementia.

### Emotional responses:

Family members or friends might be confused or upset by changes in their loved one. When people grieve, they may react in unpredictable ways. This can include:

- Withdrawal from the situation or from caregiving altogether
- Anger expressed toward others in the support network
- An urge to control the situation or cross social boundaries

You can learn more about grief related to caregiving [Here](#).

You may also find yourself providing emotional support to others. Make sure to take care of yourself too. Join a caregiver support group to meet others in similar situations: [Click Here](#).

## Maintaining A Relationship With The Care Recipient

The ups and downs of dementia can make it difficult to maintain a positive relationship. Here are video resources to help foster a relationship with the person you are caring for:

- The gems: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6UVjp\\_y8HY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z6UVjp_y8HY)
- Challenging behaviour: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZpXeefZ2jAM>
- Positive approach to care: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vasnp81x63E>

Resister for a Supporting Dementia workshop to learn more caregiving strategies: [Click Here](#)

## Maintaining Relationships With Others

You, your family members, and your friends all have individual strengths. As caregiving needs evolve, focus on these strengths to adjust your caregiving roles. Some may be best at planning while others are excellent communicators. Some people may bring a creative flair to their visits and others bring a calming presence. Everyone's relationship with the care recipient will be unique. The caregiving role can be flexible and does not have to look the same for each person.

### When conflict arises:

Disagreements can happen when more than one person is involved in caregiving. The most common disagreements occur around:

- The uncertainty of diagnosis
- Care needs
- Planning for the future

Positive communication strategies are needed as you work together to provide care. Here are some examples of good communication:

- Schedule regular times to talk. Do not wait for conflict to arise before communicating.
- Talk about one thing at a time so that no one becomes overwhelmed.
- Show empathy for others. They may have different perspectives and experiences.
- Pay attention to verbal and non-verbal communication. What emotions might be underlying what the person is saying (e.g., fear, guilt, grief)?
- Use "I" language when talking about a problem (e.g., I feel left out)

### Other ways to foster relationships include:

- Attending workshops to learn about dementia together: [Click Here](#)
- Registering for a Careteam account to easily share appointments and documents: [Click Here](#)
- Considering Family Mediation when conflict cannot be resolved easily: [Click Here](#)

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