**Identifying & Handling Dementia in Elders**

Early signs of dementia include:

* Frequently forgetting names of people
* Forgetting about routine activities
* Forgetting the details of recent activities
* Losing their way within their home
* Being unable to take care of their personal hygiene

 When caring for an elder with dementia:

* Always respond with affection and reassurance; respect the elder’s dignity
* Use simple words and sentences; speak slowly and clearly
* Break down activities into smaller tasks; assist them with the ones they can no longer perform
* Gently remind them if they forget something
* To make conversation, try to talk about the elder’s distant past
* If you notice any new symptoms, inform the elder’s family and doctor
* Support the elder retain their sense of identity and self-worth
* Remember to take care of yourself physically and mentally

**Importance of Exercise for an Elder**

* For an elder, exercising helps:
  + Maintain proper functioning of muscles, joints, and internal organs
  + Increase appetite and energy level
  + Make the elder more independent
  + Prevent and delay several diseases
  + Reduce medication and chances of hospitalization
  + Reduce stress and anxiety
  + Provide opportunity for socializing

**Various types of Exercise for an Elder**

For independent elders:

* + Walking, gentle swimming or cycling, calisthenics and yoga are suitable
  + Independently done routine activities also provide exercise

For partially dependent elders:

* + Chair exercises work out both upper and lower body
  + Use a sturdy chair that has back support but no wheels or armrests
  + Several exercises can be done by taking support of a wall

For fully dependent elders:

* + Passive exercises are usually recommended
  + Support the elder's hands and feet to perform bending and stretching exercises
  + Allow the person to independently exercise the active side of the body
  + Take advice from the elder's doctor and physiotherapist

**Precautions with Exercise**

* The exercise kit should contain:
  + A pair of good shoes
  + Loose comfortable clothing like a tracksuit
  + Some warm clothing like a jacket
  + Elbow and knee supports
  + Pain relief spray, elastic and adhesive bandages
  + Water bottle and light snack

To ensure the elder's safety while exercising:

* + Never make the elder exercise empty stomach or immediately after a big meal
  + Do not make the elder exercise in extreme weather
  + Choose level ground for exercising
  + Encourage the elder to do warm up and cool down activities
  + Ask the elder to begin slowly and exercise at a comfortable pace
  + Do not let the elder over-exert
  + Make the elder stop exercising if signs of pain or fatigue appear
  + Make the elder wear warm clothing immediately after exercising
  + Make the elder exercise regularly
  + After a gap, encourage the elder to start like a beginner again

**Being a Good Listener to the Elder**

When an elder is talking:

* + Pay attention to them
  + Do not get distracted
  + Do not interrupt the elder
  + Focus on what is being said and not your response
  + Acknowledge what is being said
  + Do not hurry to form opinions
  + Maintain eye contact and open body posture
  + Do not change the subject of the conversation
  + Do not offer solutions until asked

Be patient, sympathetic, and respectful

**Handling Refusal for Help**

* Identify the reason why the elder refuses to accept your help
* Use suitable strategies to make the elder accept help
* While you do this, keep your own emotions in control
* Reasons for refusal to accept help can be emotional or financial

To make the elder accept help:

* + Give the elder time to consider your offer of help
  + Make the elder feel in control of the final decision
  + Find more cost-effective options for help
  + Explain how accepting help can lead to more convenience
  + Take help from another trusted person

To keep your emotions in control:

* + Remind yourself to be patient
  + Excuse yourself from the situation for a few minutes
  + Try deep breathing, saying a small prayer, or looking at a photograph of a loved one

**Handling Anxious Behavior**

* Excessive worry, fear, restlessness and inability to sleep, and constant repetitive actions or speech are some of the common signs of anxious behavior
* To calm down an anxious person:
  + Do not argue or say the elder is worrying unnecessarily
  + Be patient, sympathetic, and reassuring with the elder
  + Remove factors that contribute to the elder’s anxiety
  + Encourage the elder to take a few deep breaths and have something to drink
  + Distract the elder’s attention to an enjoyable activity
  + Try alternative therapies like music therapy and aromatherapy
  + If nothing helps, contact the elder’s doctor for suitable medication for the person’s anxiety

**Handling Angry Behavior**

* Irritability, anxiety, and behavioral issues are some of the common reasons for angry behavior

To calm down an angry person:

* + Ask what has offended the elder
  + Take corrective action for your mistakes
  + Identify and relieve the elder’s fears
  + Break behavioral patterns responsible for anger

To keep your emotions in control:

* + Do not take the elder’s anger personally
  + Focus on the reasons behind the anger
  + Excuse yourself from the situation for a while

Find ways to calm yourself