

Together We Can!

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Facing memory loss
as a family



alzheimer's  association®

What is dementia?

Dementia is a brain disease that causes problems with memory, thinking, communication and behavior. The disease gets worse over time and people lose their ability to take care of themselves. It can be difficult to take care of a person with dementia.

The caregiver and the family have great challenges to face.



Remember, caregivers who take care of themselves, give better care.

Taking better care of yourself can include the following:

- Find support. It can be a friend, counselor, or family member.
- Set aside time for yourself. Get plenty of rest.
- Learn about the disease.
- Learn about community services.
- Attend informal meetings about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias.
- Ask for your help whenever you need a break from caregiving or "you time."
- Set up a routine for taking care if the person with dementia.
- Inform family members that they can be helpful by helping care for the patient, buying adult diapers, clothing, etc.
- Talk to the doctor about any changes you see in the person you're taking care of.

We present the Jiménez family. A family dedicated to the care of their mother and grandmother, Doña Rosa Jiménez.



Who are you? Why are you looking at me that way?

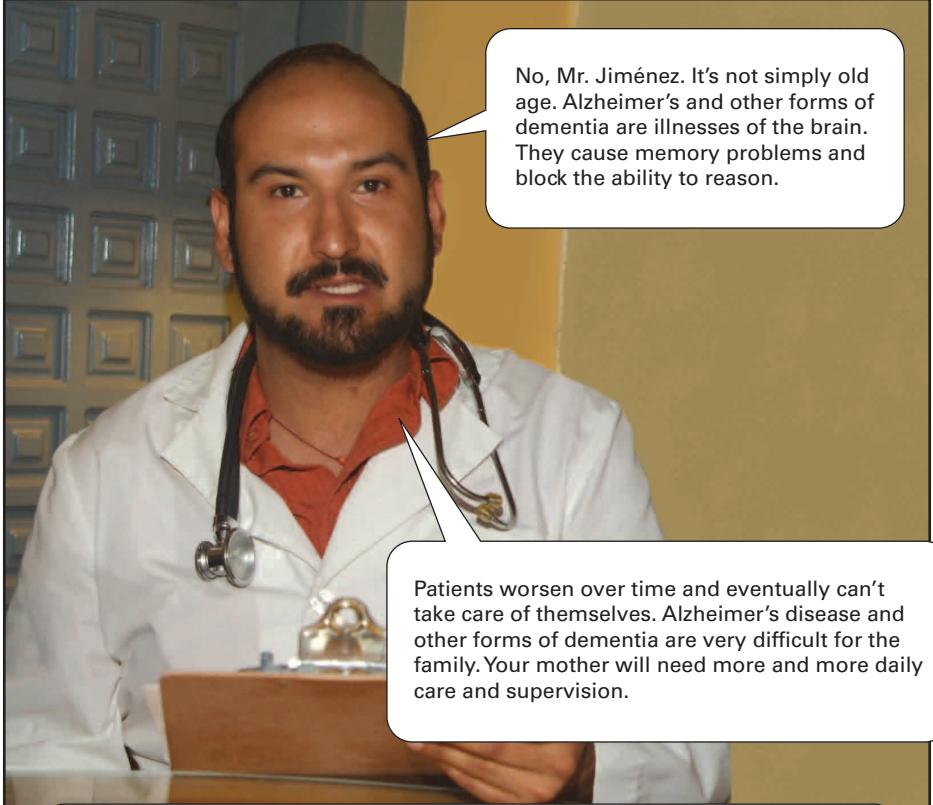
I'm your granddaughter, Abuela. Don't you recognize me?



The family goes to Dr. Martinez for a diagnosis.

Mrs. Jimenez, judging from your symptoms and the exam, you have serious memory problems. In your case, it's Alzheimer's disease.





No, Mr. Jiménez. It's not simply old age. Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia are illnesses of the brain. They cause memory problems and block the ability to reason.

Patients worsen over time and eventually can't take care of themselves. Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia are very difficult for the family. Your mother will need more and more daily care and supervision.

I would like you to make an appointment with a social worker, Ms. María López. She can help you set up a care plan for Mrs. Jiménez. Any kind of dementia can be difficult for the family and you will need some help.



I'm her daughter.
It's up to me...

Well, Delia, I have to go out of town. Take care of her...



Socorro, Dr. Martínez says that mama has Alzheimer's disease.



You remember that I took care of my aunt with dementia? I know how difficult this is.



Oh Socorro, my poor mother!







Of course you're her daughter. But if you were her nurse you would understand that when she loses control, she doesn't know what she's doing.



I think I see what you're trying to tell me. I can keep loving her like her daughter, but not feel offended by her actions.

Yes, that's it. If she becomes aggressive, or yells at you, try not to feel insulted. Act calmly and with patience.



You're right! A good nurse does not feel insulted. Instead she acts with calmness and patience.

This isn't easy.



No it isn't. But you know, you can face the situation without tearing yourself apart.

A few days later...

Delia, give me the dog's leash. I want to take him for a walk.



We don't have a dog anymore. She can't go out by herself dressed like that, and with those rollers in her hair!

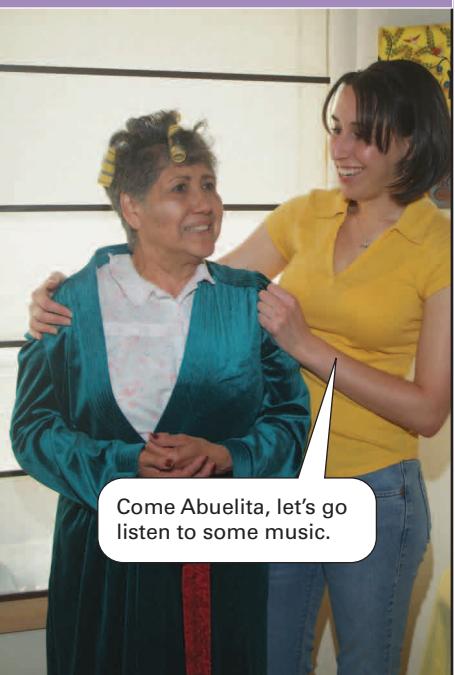




Socorro and Delia continue talking while Abuela believes she's still a young girl...

Mercedes invites Abuela out of the room so Delia can keep talking to Socorro.

Delia, do you know that the Day Care Center has dances for its participants once a week? Maybe your mother would like to go.



They have trained persons at the center who take care of participants like your mother. This will also give you a little free time.



Delia, just think about it. It might help.

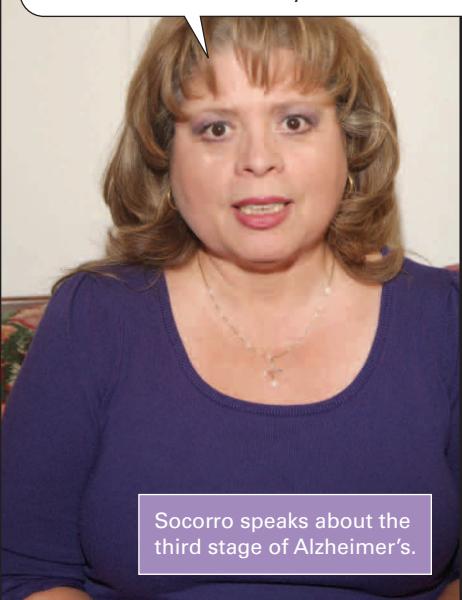


I don't know what to do. There is so much to think about.



Remember that I had to feed my aunt, bathe her, change her diaper, everything!

I learned this at the information meetings about Alzheimer's disease. If you go, you'll find people like yourself. They are learning how to care for their family members.



Oh my God, Socorro, you mean she's going to get worse? I noticed how you distracted mama when she had the hallucination to walk the dog. Where did you learn to do this?

Socorro speaks about the third stage of Alzheimer's.



Oh dear God! Mama could have burned the house down! We kept calm and distracted her. We're learning how to meet this challenge.



Delia has learned an important caregiver skill: to distract the patient.

You'll never guess what mama just did. I think she's getting worse.



But what can I do for you? You need to give her more attention.



Socorro, Manuel doesn't understand how difficult the situation with mama is. I need help. I'm going to call the social worker that Dr. Martínez recommended.

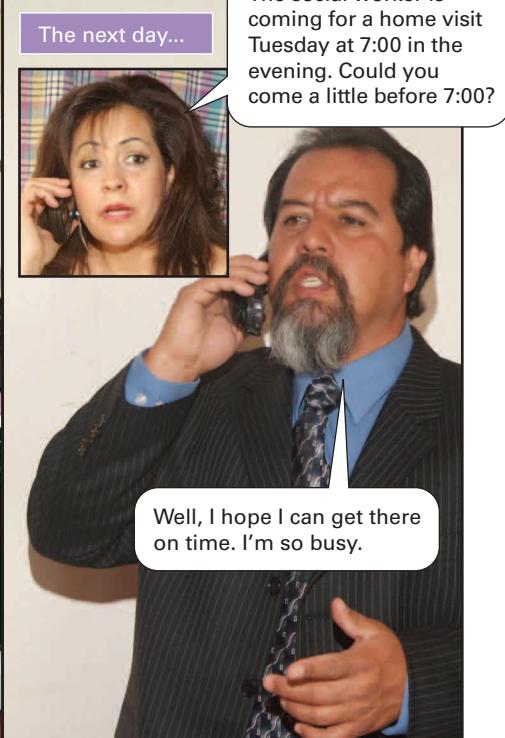


Good idea, Delia. Get some help.

You have to act right away. Put in safety precautions to avoid a terrible accident. You need to make sure your mother can't turn the stove on again.



Taking safety precautions in the home.



I need you to be here Manuel. I don't want to make all these decisions by myself. I need your help!



The day of the social worker's visit...



How lovely you look, Mama. There's a very nice woman coming to see us this evening. Manuel will be here too.

I'm so glad you're here!
Mama is very anxious.



They were working on the road.

Upon entering his mother's bedroom,
Manuel is in for a surprise...

Help! A Thief! Help!

! ?





Your doctor can talk to you about appropriate medicines for Mrs. Jiménez. Let's talk about the best way for the family to take care of your mother.

I would recommend that you enroll Mrs. Jiménez in a day care center. This way she won't be bored or restless, during the day.



No, Mr. Jiménez. These centers are especially dedicated to care for adults like your mother for part of the day.



And how much do these centers cost?

There may be programs to help with some costs. I can look into this. Why don't you visit a center and see what you think?



Mrs. Moreno, you have told me all that is happening to your mother, but you haven't told me about yourself. How are you doing?

It is normal for you to feel tired and drained. You're doing very hard work. Sometimes caregivers get depressed. That's why it's important to get help.



The truth is Ms. López, I'm very tired. I have no energy and I'm very sad.



Even though my daughter and my comadre help me a lot, I feel like I am carrying the world on my shoulders.

I understand. This is why I encourage you to look for services in the community. This is the time for the whole family to come together and each person do their part.



And you Mr. Jiménez, are you helping your sister?



Well, the truth is that I am very busy with my work.



But you know the most important thing I've learned? I've learned that the caregiver who cares for herself, gives better care!

Consuelo, mama will continue to decline until she is bedbound. We have to begin to help and share the responsibility among us.



¡Bravo, Delia!



Taking care of a person with dementia is not easy.

Caregivers may get depressed. If you think you might be going through depression, take a look at this checklist.

Check all that apply to you:

- I have been feeling down, blue, tearful and overwhelmed lately.
- I feel this almost every day.
- I have trouble sleeping. Sometimes I can't fall asleep. Other times I wake up and can't go back to sleep.
- I don't enjoy things the way I used to.
- I don't feel like eating.
- I feel so stressed, I am missing work and other things important to me.
- I feel lonely a lot of the time.
- It seems like I don't have happy feelings very much.
- I don't feel very good about the future.
- Sometimes I just want to give up and have someone else take care of my family member.

If you checked several of these, you may be suffering from depression. There is help for you. Take this list to your doctor and talk to him/her about your feelings. Ask for help.

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