

9 Tips for Supporting Those in Distress over Cognitive Losses



1. **Acknowledge and validate.** This is always the first and most important step in supporting those with fears, no matter what they are. Show them that they have your full attention.
2. **Never dismiss their concerns.** For example, rather than saying “That is nothing for you to worry about.”, try like: “I can understand that would be very upsetting.”
3. **Offer privacy.** If they are very distressed, invite them to a space where they can express what is going on in private.
4. **Reassure them that they will not be alone.** That no matter what happens, they will have support to help them through.
5. **Help reduce the stigma attached to dementia.** The Dementia Action Alliance is a wonderful organization that focuses on helping to reduce the stigma associated with dementia. They offer great resources and toolkits you can use to help your community: <https://daanow.org/dev/our-initiatives/see-the-whole-person/>.
6. **Offer resources.** Ask them if they would like to learn more about dementia. For example, The Alzheimer Society of British Columbia offers a helpline (1-800-936-6033), as well as education workshops, support groups, resources and services. Or you can use the website of Alzheimer Society Canada which has excellent resources. Here is one link called “Changes in your abilities”.
<http://alzheimer.ca/en/Home/Living-with-dementia/I-have-dementia/Changes-in-your-abilities>
7. **Keep mentally healthy.** Let them know there are ways that they can keep themselves mentally healthy. There is more and more research that demonstrates that exercising the brain, (e.g., through puzzles, word games, etc.) There are many offered online. Here is one example: <http://alzheimersprevention.org/4-pillars-of-prevention/mind-games/>
8. **Help someone every day.** Helping others is a probably one of the best approaches to worry and fear. It could be something simple like taking someone for a walk.
9. **Participate in an ongoing support group.** Encourage them to continue talking about their feelings and concerns as they come up. Support groups are often the best ongoing approach. Through these groups, please find help and relief when they are experiencing difficult situations. This is because meeting with others in the same situation as themselves brings comfort and hope—that they will not be alone with whatever is coming next.

Questions or ideas? We’d love to hear from you! Email info@javagp.com or call 1-866-523-2411 (toll free)