

**Lessons Learned During a Pandemic: Managing Stress,  
Building Resiliency  
and Creating Positive Outcome  
Webinar**

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Taking care of yourself both physically and psychologically is an essential part of taking care of yourself professionally, especially during a pandemic. Think of it as the “Three P’s” of self-care: psychological, physical and professional wellbeing.

## **Fostering Personal and Professional Wellness**

Although there is no single measure or definition for well-being, the Center for Disease Control has recognized the significance of well-being in public health (see <https://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/wellbeing.htm>). Under any definition, it is important to remember that wellness is not about the absence of stressful events or illness. Rather, wellness involves a more holistic approach to overall health that involves the presence of positivity to help reduce the strain associated with different life stressors, and the resilience to adapt to change in a healthy way.

**Take care of your body.** The mind and body are inextricably connected. Positive lifestyle factors such as proper nutrition and hydration, regular exercise, ample sleep and obtaining appropriate medical care can strengthen your body, making you better able to cope with the physical toll that stress and negative emotions can take. Physical exercises that everyone can do, such as deep breathing, can help reduce stress and bring emotions into balance.

## **Taking care of your mind**

**“Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices.”** (<https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health>)

Nourishing our mental, social and emotional wellbeing is just as important as nourishing our bodies. Although each is subjective by nature, they all begin by recognizing areas in our life that are stressed so that we can develop different strategies and coping skills to deal with the stressors in a positive way.

Proper self-care requires self-awareness, and sometimes we may need to ask for professional help. Pay attention to such things as: changes in eating habits, feeling fatigued or lethargic, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, feeling unusually forgetful, angry, worried or scared, fighting with family and friends, and/or performing daily tasks has become more difficult.

It may be tempting to deal with life’s stressors with alcohol, drugs, or other substances, but any relief is temporary. Focus instead on developing the tools to manage stress, rather than seeking to eliminate the feeling of stress altogether.

Substance abuse can cause serious impairments in decision making and work performance that can land an attorney into serious professional trouble. Unfortunately, substance abuse is all too common in the legal profession. Contacting a Lawyer Assistance Program may help. To find more information about LAP programs you can go to: [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer\\_assistance/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/lawyer_assistance/)

## **Professional wellness**

### **Rule 1.1: Competence**

**A lawyer shall provide competent representation to a client. Competent representation requires the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation.**

#### **Competency Issues During Covid-19**

Be wary of branching out into new areas of law where you are not competent because clients need new kinds of help and lawyers need work. Even with the best of intentions, lawyers have an ethical obligation not to take on a case that you don't have the requisite knowledge and expertise in – especially very specialized areas of law.

Like mental and physical wellness, professional responsibility requires self-awareness. Only you know what you don't know – it's a matter of self-examination. It's ok to move out of your practice area, just be mindful. You may take this time to set new professional goals. But be sure to set realistic, attainable goals and do something regularly to help you move closer to attaining those goals. For example, if you want to venture into a new practice area, you could join a bar association section committee to make connections with other lawyers who practice in that area. A new goal could also be to obtain co-counsel on a case involved in a new practice area. But if you cannot handle a case competently, do not hesitate to refer it out – you might save yourself a lot of grief.

#### **Competency of Technology**

**NYSBA Comment 8: “A lawyer should keep abreast of the benefits and risks associated with technology that the lawyer uses to provide services to clients, or to store or transmit confidential info.”**

Covid 19 and the effect on the legal system has taken many of us out of our comfort zone when it comes to technology. There is a big reasonableness flag involved with Competence – if you're not great at doing something, that's different from not being competent at it. Nevertheless, we are responsible for learning the technology needed to responsibly represent our clients in these new times. The Unified Court System has provided a series of Pandemic Technology Support Webinars to help address the challenges associated with working remotely. They can be found at: <https://ww2.nycourts.gov/accesstojusticecommission/ts.shtml>.

### **Rule 1.3: Diligence**

**A lawyer shall act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client.**

#### **Diligence Issues During Covid-19**

The standard still requires us to act with “reasonable” diligence and promptness. For example, we are still required to return calls and inquiries in a “reasonable fashion.” Even though our ethical duty has not changed, we should be aware that clients may be more stressed or sensitive during uncertain times, and may want more attention or to hear back from you sooner. Sometimes it can be helpful to take preemptive measures, such as emailing clients to set their minds at ease by informing them you are still working on their cases (even if not physically in the office), and will still respond to

inquiries within a reasonable period of time. Of course, we still cannot ignore emergencies, even during a pandemic.

#### **Rule 1.6: Confidentiality of Information**

**(a) A lawyer shall not reveal information relating to the representation of a client unless the client gives informed consent, the disclosure is impliedly authorized in order to carry out the representation or the disclosure is permitted by paragraph (b). ...**

**(c) A lawyer shall make reasonable efforts to prevent the inadvertent or unauthorized disclosure of, or unauthorized access to, information relating to the representation of a client.**

#### **Confidentiality During Covid-19**

We need to protect the confidentiality of both documentary information and our attorney-client conversations. We need to be mindful while working at home that the rules surrounding confidentiality still apply. There may be lots of verbal communication outside of the office and we should take note of the floor plan in our homes so that kids and significant others do not overhear things that they shouldn't. We should also be wary of getting mail at home where it can sit on the counter with the family mail for a few days – be sure to sort it out immediately from the household mail. Also, you should be careful about leaving documents/paperwork lying around the house. It is best to have a separate space for all legal work.

#### **Confidentiality with Zoom**

We have all seen funny videos of Zoom meetings where something unusual happens in the background. While we cannot anticipate every occurrence, you should treat a Zoom meeting as if you are in your office: go to a separate room and close the door. This will remind your family that the conversations you are having are supposed to be private. You should also be cautious of the technology that you are using to be sure that any communications are properly protected.

#### **Confidentiality with email**

Be careful not to use email to discuss strategy or other confidential matters with clients, or send them confidential documents. Email and text are not the most secure and have been the subject of some scrutiny in terms of preserving client confidentiality. This is no different from when you are in your office – it is just easier to email a client rather than drafting a hard copy and putting it in the mail. Again, the Unified Court System's Pandemic Technology Support Webinars help address many of the challenges associated with working from home.

(<https://ww2.nycourts.gov/accesstojusticecommission/ts.shtml>).

#### **New York Courts Standards of Civility**

Although the Standards of Civility are not intended to be enforced by disciplinary action, they are rules that we should all aspire to live by. The Standards of Civility state in part:

**"Lawyers should be courteous and civil in all professional dealings with other persons" and should "refrain from engaging in acts of rudeness and disrespect."**

The ability to effectively and respectfully communicate with each other is essential to our wellbeing as both individuals and as a legal community.

A full copy of the New York Courts Standards of Civility can be found here:

<https://www.nycourts.gov/LegacyPDFS/RULES/jointappellate/Jan%202020%20-%20civility%20standards%20CLEAN.pdf>

## **Additional Resources:**

Building Your Resilience (American Psychological Association):

<https://www.apa.org/topics/resilienceResources>:

Promoting Wellness: A Guide to Community Action

<https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma16-4957.pdf>

<https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/mental-health-wellness/seek-help.aspx>

Unified Court System Pandemic Technology Support Webinars

<https://ww2.nycourts.gov/accesstojusticecommission/ts.shtml>

## *Take Back Your Morning Tracker*

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Silence					
Journal					
Visualize					
Read					
Exercise					

*Silence:* Start your morning routine by clearing your mind in silence with meditation, prayer, reflection, deep breathing or gratitude.

*Journal:* Writing helps you to process your thoughts and reflect. Recommendation: Start Today Journal. Writing can include things such as a gratitude practice (writing down 5 things you are grateful for every day) and goals that you want to achieve.

*Visualization:* Close your eyes and use your imagination or look at a vision board of inspiring images to see what you want in your life, the things you need to create to achieve what you want, and who you need to be to get there.

*Read:* Spend as much time as you can allot every morning reading personal development. It can be 5 minutes. Choose a book that is relevant to what you are working on in the moment whether it relates to personal, professional or financial goals.

*Exercise:* Spend at least 30 minutes exercising. Exercising first thing in the morning can improve your mood, help you focus, lower your stress levels, and set you up for a very productive day!

# Joy Thompson's COVID-19 Survival Guide



## B R E A T H E ©

- B = Breathe** – Benefits of controlled breathing are [well documented](#).
- R = Rest** – “Staying woke” is exhausting. [Sleep helps your body and mind recuperate](#).
- E = Eat Well** – Avoid keeping unhealthy foods in the house. Eat better. Feel better.
- A = Ask for Help** – We are all human. Talk to loved ones. Pick up the phone.  
Visit [NYCWell](#) for digital wellness resources and the state’s [Emotional Support Hotline](#).
- T = Take Breaks** – Unplug. Disconnect. Power down. 5 minutes. An hour. A day. You need it.
- H = Humor is Healing** – Find opportunities to laugh: Movies, books, high school photos.
- E = “Exercise is My Friend” – This is your new COVID-19 mantra.** Find excuses to move:
- Gyms are livestreaming classes on Zoom and Instagram.
  - “[A personal trainer’s 20-minute travel workout](#)” also works at home.
  - Not in American Gladiator shape? Small NY apartment? [You can still get in your steps](#).
  - I am a big fan of [yoga](#). I call it meditation for the body. However, if you are not quite ready for downward or upward dog, then try [Standing Yoga in Your Office](#), [Chair Yoga for Seniors](#) or other YouTube beginner-friendly classes.

Finally, and once again, remember to **BREATHE** and stay well.

# TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF

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HOW TO RECOGNIZE AND  
MANAGE CAREGIVER STRESS





# 10 WAYS TO MANAGE STRESS AND BE A HEALTHIER CAREGIVER

Are you so overwhelmed by taking care of someone else that you've neglected your own physical, mental and emotional well-being? To avoid putting your own health at risk, consider the following tips.

## 1. Take a break.

Consider using respite care services to allow you a temporary rest from caregiving while the person with Alzheimer's disease continues to receive care in a safe environment. Visit [alz.org/care](https://alz.org/care) to learn more.

## 2. Seek out community resources.

Contact the Alzheimer's Association® or use our online **Community Resource Finder** ([alz.org/CRF](https://alz.org/CRF)) to locate dementia care resources in your area. Adult day programs, in-home assistance, companions and meal delivery are just some of the services that can help you manage daily tasks.

## 3. Become an educated caregiver.

As the disease progresses, it may become necessary to adopt new caregiving skills. The Association offers programs to help you better understand and cope with common behavioral and personality changes that may occur. Visit the **Alzheimer's and Dementia Caregiver Center** at [alz.org/care](https://alz.org/care) to learn more and access care training resources, including free online workshops.

#### 4. **Get help and find support.**

Our **24/7 Helpline (800.272.3900)**, **ALZConnected®** online social networking community (**alzconnected.org**) and local support groups (**alz.org/findus**) are good resources. If stress becomes overwhelming, seek help from a doctor or counselor.

#### 5. **Take care of your own health.**

Try to eat well, exercise and get plenty of rest. Making sure that you are healthy can help you be a better caregiver.

#### 6. **Manage your level of stress.**

Stress can cause physical problems (blurred vision, stomach irritation, high blood pressure) and changes in behavior (irritability, lack of concentration, change in appetite). Note your symptoms and discuss with a doctor, as needed.

#### 7. **Accept changes as they occur.**

People with Alzheimer's change over time and so do their needs. They may require care beyond what you can provide on your own. Becoming aware of community resources — from home care services to residential care — can make the transition easier. So will the support and assistance of those around you.





## **8. Make legal and financial plans.**

Putting legal and financial plans in place after an Alzheimer's diagnosis allows the person with the disease to participate in decision-making. Having these plans in place can provide comfort to the entire family. Many documents, including advance directives, can be prepared without the help of a legal professional. However, if you're unsure about how to complete documents or make financial plans, you may want to seek assistance from an attorney specializing in elder law, a financial adviser who is familiar with elder or long-term care planning, or both.

## **9. Know you're doing your best.**

Remember that the care you provide makes a difference and that you're doing the best you can. You may feel guilty because you can't do more, but care needs increase as Alzheimer's progresses. Regardless of how care is delivered, you can make sure that the person with the disease is well cared for and safe.

## **10. Visit your doctor regularly.**

Take time to get regular checkups and pay attention to any exhaustion, stress, sleeplessness or changes in appetite or behavior. Ignoring symptoms can cause your physical and mental health to decline.

# 10 COMMON SIGNS OF CAREGIVER STRESS

- 1. Denial** about the disease and its effect on the person who has been diagnosed.  
*I know Mom is going to get better.*
- 2. Anger** at the person living with Alzheimer's or frustration that he or she can't do the things that once came naturally.  
*He knows how to get dressed — he's just being stubborn.*
- 3. Social withdrawal** from friends and activities.  
*I don't care about visiting neighbors anymore.*
- 4. Anxiety** about the future.  
*What happens when he needs more care than I can provide?*
- 5. Depression** that affects your ability to cope.  
*I just don't care anymore.*
- 6. Exhaustion** that interferes with daily tasks.  
*I'm too tired for this.*
- 7. Sleeplessness** caused by worrying.  
*What if she wanders out of the house?*
- 8. Irritability** that triggers negative responses.  
*Leave me alone!*
- 9. Lack of concentration** that disrupts familiar tasks.  
*I was so busy, I forgot my appointment.*
- 10. Health problems** that begin to take a mental and physical toll.  
*I can't remember the last time I felt good.*



**alz.org/care**

The Alzheimer's and Dementia Caregiver Center provides information and resources.



**alz.org/CRF**

Community Resource Finder - Find local resources.



**alzconnected.org**

ALZConnected® - Connect with other caregivers who can relate to your situation.



**alz.org/findus**

We're in communities nationwide.



**800.272.3900**

24/7 Helpline - Available all day, every day.

**alzheimer's  association®**

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

**Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's disease®.**

**800.272.3900 | alz.org®**

*This is an official publication of the Alzheimer's Association but may be distributed by unaffiliated organizations and individuals. Such distribution does not constitute an endorsement of these parties or their activities by the Alzheimer's Association.*

## Coronavirus (COVID-19): Tips for dementia caregivers

Most likely, dementia does not increase risk for COVID-19, the respiratory illness caused by the new coronavirus, just like dementia does not increase risk for flu. However, dementia-related behaviors, increased age and common health conditions that often accompany dementia may increase risk.

For example, people with Alzheimer's disease and all other dementia may forget to wash their hands or take other recommended precautions to prevent illness. In addition, diseases like COVID-19 and the flu may worsen cognitive impairment due to dementia.

As communities and care services begin reopening, it is important for caregivers to consider the risks and take additional safety precautions for people living with dementia.

### Tips for dementia caregivers at home

Caregivers of individuals living with Alzheimer's and all other dementia should follow guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) ([cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/prevention.html)), and consider the following tips:

- For people living with dementia, increased confusion is often the first symptom of any illness. If a person living with dementia shows rapidly increased confusion, contact your health care provider for advice. Unless the person is having difficulty breathing or a very high fever, it is recommended that you call your health care provider instead of going directly to an emergency room. Your doctor may be able to treat the person without a visit to the hospital.
- People living with dementia may need extra and/or written reminders and support to remember important hygienic practices from one day to the next.
  - Consider placing signs in the bathroom and elsewhere to remind people with dementia to wash their hands with soap for 20 seconds.
  - Demonstrate thorough hand-washing.
  - Alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol can be a quick alternative to hand-washing if the person with dementia cannot get to a sink or wash his/her hands easily.
- Ask your pharmacist or doctor about filling prescriptions for a greater number of days to reduce trips to the pharmacy.
- Think ahead and make alternative plans for the person with dementia should adult day care, respite, etc. be modified or cancelled in response to COVID-19.

- Think ahead and make alternative plans for care management if the primary caregiver should become sick.

### **Tips for supporting persons with dementia who receive home-based services**

If you currently receive or plan to receive services from a paid health care professional in your home:

- Contact the home health care provider and ask them to explain their protocols to reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- Check the home health care professional's temperature before they enter your home. Anyone with a temperature over 100.4° F should be excluded from providing care.
- Ask the health care professional if they have been exposed to anyone who has tested positive and if so, do not allow them into your home.
- Ensure that the health care professional washes their hands upon arrival and regularly throughout their time in your home.
- Ask the health care professional to wear a mask.
- Be aware that bringing anyone into your home increases the risk of spreading COVID-19, even if CDC guidance is followed.

### **Tips for supporting persons with dementia who live in long-term care or residential care settings**

The CDC has provided guidance on infection control and prevention of COVID-19 in nursing homes ([cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/long-term-care.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/long-term-care.html)). This guidance is for the health and safety of residents. Precautions may vary based on local situations.

- Check with the facility regarding their procedures for managing COVID-19 risk. Ensure they have your emergency contact information and the information of another family member or friend as a backup.
- Do not visit your family member if you have any signs or symptoms of illness.
- Depending on the situation in your local area, facilities may limit or not allow visitors. This is to protect the residents but it can be difficult if you are unable to see your family member.
- If visitation is not allowed, ask the facility how you can have contact with your family member. Options include telephone calls, video chats or even emails to check in.
- If your family member is unable to engage in calls or video chats, ask the facility how you can keep in touch with facility staff in order to get updates.

### **Improving the response to COVID-19 in long-term care settings**

The Alzheimer's Association is urging state and federal lawmakers to implement new policy solutions to address the issues impacting long-term care during the pandemic. The only way to end social isolation is to ensure every residential care community has access to rapid testing for all residents, staff and visitors. Join the Alzheimer's Association and urge state and federal policymakers to implement new policy

solutions to address the issues impacting these communities during the pandemic.

**Considerations as long-term care and community-based care services reopen**

*The Alzheimer's Association believes visitors are only appropriate at a long-term care community when that community has the capability to employ rapid testing for all staff, visitors and residents, and adequate and consistent access to personal protective equipment for all staff. The communal nature of these settings combined with the older age and underlying chronic conditions of most residents make the people living there extremely vulnerable to COVID-19.*

If you or someone you care for typically rely on home or community-based services, you may have experienced a disruption due to restrictions caused by COVID-19. As communities begin phased reopenings and these services become available again, it is critical to weigh the risks associated with restarting these care options.

**Long-term care settings**

Many long-term care communities have closed their doors to visitors due to the COVID-19 pandemic and heightened risks to residents. This has been an especially difficult time for caregivers and families who have been unable to see their loved ones in person. There are always risks with in-person visits, but as long-term care communities begin to allow visitors during the ongoing pandemic, there are additional steps you must take in order to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.

- Postpone your visit if you are exhibiting any symptoms of COVID-19 ([cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing)), such as fever, cough or difficulty breathing.
- Consider an outdoor visit to minimize risk of transmission, when rapid testing is not available. Outdoor visits should still include social distancing, wearing of masks and no physical contact. Ask the care community if this is a process they are supporting.
- Consider alternative ways to connect when possible, such as through phone or video calls.
- Before your visit, check with the care community on its visitation policies.
- Bring your own face mask, put it on before arriving at the facility and wear it at all times.
- Maintain social distancing for the entirety of your visit.
- Wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your face.
- Inform staff immediately if you develop a fever or symptoms consistent with COVID-19 within 14 days of your visit.



### **In-home care services**

Even when precautions are taken, any outside person entering your home increases the risk of spreading COVID-19. The risk of exposure is greater for individuals living with dementia, who tend to be older and have underlying health conditions.

To help reduce the risk associated with in-home care, it is essential that you require care providers to:

- Wear a face mask or cloth face covering. (Recommended personal protective equipment should be worn when personal care and medical services are being provided.)
- Inform you if they are experiencing any fever symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or if they have been exposed to anyone with the virus. If so, they should not visit.
- Wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds upon arrival and frequently throughout the day — especially after using the bathroom, before meals, and after coughing or sneezing.
- Avoid eating at the same time as the person living with dementia.

### **Out-of-home or community-based care**

At this time, out-of-home care options, such as adult day programs — which are communal by nature — aren't safe for people living with dementia. People with dementia may have trouble following social distancing guidance, and are extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 due to age and other medical conditions. Adult day care programs face significant challenges because attendees are cared for in close, group settings.

You could consider programs that offer virtual activities to encourage social engagement. Some services also provide meal delivery.

### **Considerations if your family member's residential facility has an incidence of COVID-19**

It is important to note that there are no simple answers and, at this time, there is no way to completely eliminate the risk of your family member being exposed to COVID-19. However, there are some questions to consider if you are faced with this situation. The answers to these questions can help you make the best decision for your family.

#### **Keeping the person in the facility**

- Ask the facility about their quarantine procedures. What is your level of confidence that CDC guidelines are being followed?
- How many people in the facility have been impacted by COVID-19? Are those affected staff, residents or both?

- Is your family member able to follow social distancing procedures (with or without help)?
  - In some cases, the person may not be able to walk or move about on their own. This could help maintain social distancing.
- Does the facility have and use personal protective equipment?
- How many staff members interact with your family member on a regular basis? Is the facility able to limit the number of staff who work with your family member?
- Is the facility adequately staffed to provide the level of care your family member requires?

### **Moving a person home**

- What level of care does the person need on a day-to-day basis? (For example, is the person able to bathe and dress him- or herself? Are they continent? Are they ambulatory or do they need assistance moving?)
  - Is your family able to provide the level of care needed?
  - While limiting the number of people who have contact with the individual is important, it is also important to assess the number of people needed to provide adequate care.
- Does anyone in your family have COVID-19 currently?
- Are there individuals in the home who work outside of the home? If so, the risk for exposure is increased.
- Is it possible to hire home care workers? This option comes with its own level of risk.

### **Moving to another facility**

- Moving a family member to another facility may be an option. However, there is no way to know whether the new facility will remain free of COVID-19 cases.
- Is the facility accepting new residents?
  - Some facilities are not accepting new residents, depending on location.
- Have there been COVID-19 cases in the new facility?

### **Tips for supporting persons living with dementia who are in the hospital**

While many hospitals are restricting or limiting visitors to help curb the spread of COVID-19 and protect patients and staff, there are still ways to support the person living with dementia during their hospitalization. CDC guidance allows care partners of persons with dementia to visit if they are essential to the person's physical or emotional well-being.

### **If visiting in person**

- Be sure to familiarize yourself with the safety requirements of the hospital beforehand.
- Bring your own face mask and put it on before arriving at the facility.

- Wash your hands regularly and avoid touching your face.
- Limit your visit to the room of the person living with dementia. (Avoid going to other locations in the hospital.)

**If you are unable to visit in person**

- Communicate with the person through phone or video calls.
- Give your contact information to the attending nurse and ask for it to be written on the white board in the person's room. Find out what kind of communication will be possible and how you can expect to receive updates.

**Staying healthy**

Pay attention to flu or pneumonia-like symptoms in yourself and others and report them to a medical professional immediately.

Follow current guidance and instruction from the CDC regarding COVID-19. Tips to keep yourself and your loved ones healthy include:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick; work from home.
- If you or the person you are caring for have regular doctor's appointments to manage dementia or other health conditions, call your health care provider to inquire about a telehealth appointment. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Medicare has recently expanded telehealth benefits to allow seniors to access health care from the safety of their homes.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.

**Tips for caregivers and people living with Alzheimer's seeking COVID-19 testing**

As a caregiver or a person living with dementia, you may be concerned with the risks of going out in public to get tested for COVID-19, or to enter a doctor's office or another testing environment. The CDC offers guidance and information on COVID-19 testing:

- There are two types of tests available: a viral test, which tells you if you have the virus currently; and an antibody test, which tells you if you were infected in the past.

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- If you think you have COVID-19, call your health care provider and arrange a telehealth appointment. Your provider can help determine if you need to be tested.
  - Your health care provider may be able to test you directly, but depending on their supply of tests, you may need to seek another source.
  - Visit your local or state health department website to find the latest information and locations for testing in your area.
  - You may want to consider drive-through testing, which allows you to remain in your car while being tested. Many state health departments are coordinating with community centers or other public locations to provide drive-through testing. Other companies, such as CVS ([cvs.com/minuteclinic/covid-19-testing](https://www.cvs.com/minuteclinic/covid-19-testing)), are offering free drive-through testing at selected locations.
    - Call ahead and see if you need to make an appointment.
    - Bring a doctor's order, your ID and an insurance card with you to the testing site.
    - Leave your car windows up until otherwise instructed.
    - Stay home while you await the results of your test.
  - The U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved two versions of an at-home testing kit. However, the sample you collect from your saliva or nasal passage will still need to be sent to a laboratory. Talk to your health care provider about the efficiency and availability of at-home testing and if it's right for you.

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## Caregiver emotions

It's normal to experience loss when someone you care about has Alzheimer's disease. It's also normal to experience a range of different emotions, including guilt, abandonment, anger and many others. It can help to acknowledge these feelings — they're a natural response to the situation — and seek information and support to deal with them.

Alzheimer's will gradually change the way you relate to the person living with the disease. As this happens, it's normal to mourn every loss and experience the stages of grieving: denial, anger, guilt, sadness and acceptance. The stages of grief don't always happen in order. You may move in and out of different stages over time. Common experiences in the grieving process include:

- **Denial and false hope.**
  - Hoping that the person is not ill.
  - Expecting the person will get better even though Alzheimer's is a progressive disease. The person will have good days and bad, and it is tempting to view the good days as signs he or she is improving.
  - Convincing yourself that he or she hasn't changed.
  - Attempting to rationalize problematic changes in memory, thinking or behavior as "just a part of aging." You may find that you get used to these changes over time and accept them as normal.
- **Anger.**
  - Frustration with the person when he or she is unable to do things that once came naturally.
  - Resenting the demands of caregiving. You may not have chosen or wanted to be in this role. It's normal to wish you had more time for other responsibilities and the things you enjoy.
  - Resenting family members who can't or won't help provide care.
  - Feeling abandoned.
- **Guilt.**
  - Having unrealistic expectations with thoughts like: "I should have done..." "I must do everything for him or her" or "I must visit him or her every day."
  - Feeling bad because you're still able to enjoy life.
  - Feeling that you've failed if, for example, you can't care for the person living with dementia at home.
  - Having negative thoughts about the person, wishing that he or she would go away or even wishing he or she would die.
  - Regretting things about your relationship before the diagnosis.
- **Sadness.**
  - Feeling overwhelmed by loss.
  - Crying frequently.

- Withdrawing from social activities or needing to connect more frequently with others.
- Withholding your emotions or displaying them more openly than usual.
- **Acceptance.**
  - Learning to live in the moment.
  - Finding personal meaning in caring for someone who is terminally ill.
  - Understanding how the grieving process affects your life.
  - Appreciating the personal growth that comes from surviving loss.
  - Finding your sense of humor.
  - Asking for and accepting help from others.

### **Face your feelings.**

- Think about all of your feelings — positive and negative.
- Let yourself be as sad as you want.
- Accept feelings of guilt — they're perfectly normal.
- Work through your anger and frustration by finding a healthy outlet, such as talking about your feelings, exercising or journaling.
- Prepare to experience feelings of loss more than once as the person living with dementia changes over time.
- Claim the grieving process as your own. No two people experience grief the same way. Some people need more time to grieve than others. Some realize their feelings right away, while others may not grieve until caregiving has ended. Your experience will depend on the severity and duration of the person's illness, on your own history of loss and on the nature of your relationship with the person who has Alzheimer's.
- Know that it's common to feel conflicting emotions, such as love and anger, at the same time.

### **Accept yourself.**

- Consider if your expectations for yourself are realistic.
- Try to focus on the decisions you can make and things you can control. Think about the fond memories you have of the person.
- Allow yourself to feel good.
- As time permits, get involved or stay involved in activities that you enjoy.
- Turn to spiritual beliefs, if you choose, for consolation.

### **Get support.**

- Talk with someone you trust — such as a counselor, pastor, family member or friend — about your grief, guilt and anger.
- Connect with other caregivers, family members and friends affected by Alzheimer's.
- When you talk with other caregivers, share your emotions. Cry and laugh together. Don't limit conversations to caregiving tips.

- Know that some people may not understand your grief. Most people think grief happens when someone dies. They may not know that it's possible to grieve deeply for someone who is still alive but experiencing profound changes due to the progressive nature of the disease.
- Get support from others in similar situations by attending a support group or joining ALZConnected® (alzconnected.org), the Alzheimer's Association® online community.

### **Take care of yourself.**

Balancing your efforts to care for the person living with dementia and care for yourself can be difficult. However, the best thing you can do as a caregiver is to take care of yourself by paying attention to your physical, mental and emotional well-being. Here are some ways to do that:

- Ask others for emotional support.
- Ask others for help. Be specific. Ask friends or family to stay with the person while you take a break from caregiving. Or ask others to run errands or do tasks, such as grocery shopping or mowing the lawn.
- Allow yourself to accept the help that is offered.
- Create balance in your life. Do things that bring you peace and comfort.
- Give yourself time to rest. You'll be less vulnerable to illness and better able to provide care.
- Make sure you are getting adequate nutrition and exercise. Keep your medical check-ups.
- Maintain your friendships.
- Listen to relaxing or soothing music, take a walk or try deep breathing exercises to help relieve stress.
- Let yourself enjoy humorous moments.
- Keep in mind that taking care of yourself can help you provide the best possible care for the person living with dementia.

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