



Dementia Caregiver's Isolation Toolkit

In the best of times, taking care of someone with dementia living at home is hard. So hard, most experts advise you to not try it alone – your network of community resources, family, friends, neighbors, and health care providers are vital to your success. Isolation is one of the greatest risks to the well-being of caregivers like you.

But for most caregivers, the COVID-19 pandemic has eliminated access to this support system, making an already-overwhelming job feel even more impossible. ***You may be feeling extraordinary exhaustion, depression, anxiety, and burn-out right now, but be unable to get help for yourself.***

This toolkit is designed to help you take care of yourself while also keeping your loved one safe and healthy at home.

This tool does not require a long uninterrupted sitting - it is designed to be done within the constant demands and stop-and-go nature of caregiving. You can check off one small step at a time, or you can do all the steps at once. At the end you'll have a chance to summarize what you discovered into a few useful things you can act on; doing this step may be easier when your loved one is asleep so you're not interrupted.



Step 1. Choose five minutes to look over this toolkit

This will help you plan how you'd like to use it, and get your thoughts going. You might do this when you know you're unlikely to be interrupted.

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Step 2. What has changed?

During stay-at-home orders, you may be working so hard to stay on top of your tasks that you haven't had a chance to reflect on how your resources and needs have changed. Start by taking inventory:

Safety and security

	Has this changed?	If so, write a few words to describe
My physical safety at home	Y / N	
Having enough money to pay for basic needs	Y / N	
My own health (<i>Sleep, ability to get to your doctor or pharmacy, etc</i>)	Y / N	

The impact of dementia

	Has this changed?	If so, write a few words to describe
My loved one's needs and symptoms	Y / N	
My mood and emotions	Y / N	
My ability to meet loved one's needs	Y / N	

The rhythm of your day: Roles, Habits, Routines

	Has this changed?	If so, write a few words to describe
My non-caregiving roles	Y / N	
My habits	Y / N	
My routines	Y / N	

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Step 3: Usual stress-management options

Stress management steps that experts typically recommend may or may not be accessible during this time. Scan this list from the Alzheimer's Association, circling the steps you can do right now, and writing whether these are important for you. (You can get more info about these options at <https://www.alz.org/help-support/caregiving/caregiver-health/caregiver-stress>)

	Can you access this?	How might this help you?
Using available community resources	Y / N	
National or local support groups	Y / N	
Relaxation techniques	Y / N	
Physical activity	Y / N	
Finding time for yourself	Y / N	
Learning new caregiving skills	Y / N	
Legal and financial planning needs	Y / N	
Other:		



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Step 4: Barriers: what prevents you from doing what you need to do?

	Does this affect you?	Write a few words to describe
Not enough time		
Safety concerns		
Not enough money		
I don't have transportation		
I'm exhausted		
Loved-one's needs are more pressing		
I'm not sure how		
Its hard to get started		
I don't feel interested		
I can't concentrate		
I need help to physically do it		
Other reasons:		

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Step 5: Choose three things and make a plan

Take about 5-10 minutes to look over your answers and thoughts.

1. Choose three ideas, topics, or concerns that feel important to you. Fill out the table below
2. Choose at least *one* action from the "I can..." column
3. Call a loved one, share your list, and ask them to call you in one week to check in on your progress.

Topic/concern	Current barriers	Resources I have	I can...
<i>Example 1: Can't do my role as a grandparent because I can't be with my grandchildren</i>	<i>Example 1: Safer-At-Home order, poor internet connection for video chat, can't leave spouse</i>	<i>Example 1: Phone, mail to tell them I love them</i>	<i>Example 1: Write them letters, call on the phone 1x/week</i>
<i>Example 2: Making healthy food</i>	<i>Example 2: Trouble getting to the store (can't bring loved one or leave at home alone); managing their dementia-related symptoms take time away from cooking</i>	<i>Example 2: Meals on Wheels; neighbors/friends/family who can still go out to shop</i>	<i>Example 2: Ask state/county aging and disabilities resource centers for meal programs; Call loved one's doctor's office for help with behavioral and daily skills strategies</i>

Action plan for the week of: _____ Shared with: _____

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____