



# Alzheimer's Services

## of Marshall County

P. O. Box 2842, Albertville, AL 35950

Caring for a person with memory loss and confusion can be exhausting. The most loving and responsible thing you can do for your loved one is to stay as physically and emotionally healthy as you can.

### Tips to Manage Caregiver Stress: 10 Ways to be a Healthier Caregiver

- 1. Understand what's going on as early as possible.** Symptoms of Alzheimer's may appear gradually. It can be easy to explain away changing or unusual behavior when a loved one seems physically healthy. Consult a doctor when you see changes in memory, mood or behavior. Don't delay; early diagnosis is important. There are medications to slow down the progress of the disease and help ease the symptoms.
- 2. Become an informed caregiver.** As the disease progresses, new caregiving skills may be necessary to help you better understand and cope with the increasing behaviors and personality changes that often accompany Alzheimer's as it progresses.
- 3. Learn what community resources are available and get help.** Trying to do everything by yourself puts your own health at risk. Actively seek the support of family, friends and your faith community. Tell others exactly what they can do to help.
- 4. Take care of yourself.** Exercise, watch your diet and get plenty of rest. Making sure that you stay healthy will help you be a better caregiver.
- 5. 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). Be aware of what your body is telling you and do not ignore these symptoms. Learn to use stress management and coping techniques, such as deep breathing or guided imagery. Never rely on alcohol or drugs to reduce stress.
- 6. Visit your doctor regularly.** Take time to get regular checkups and discuss any symptoms of stress with your doctor.
- 7. Accept changes as they occur.** Your loved one may eventually require care beyond what you can provide on your own. Find out about other options now so you are ready for the changes as they occur.
- 8. Make legal and financial plans now.** Consult a professional to discuss legal and financial issues including advance directives, wills, housing issues and long-term care. Involve the person with Alzheimer's and family members whenever possible.
- 9. Be realistic.** Many behaviors can not be controlled. Grieve the losses. Focus on the good times and enjoy good memories.
- 10. Give yourself credit, not guilt.** Know that the care you provide does make a difference and you are doing the best you can when you make sure the patient is well cared for and safe. Don't feel guilty because you can't do more.