

Living with a person with Alzheimer's disease

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In life there are many events that disrupt all our future existence. One of them and one that no one expects, is to be communicated that a close person has Alzheimer, a dementia.

This organic, degenerative and progressive disease that affects higher intellectual abilities (memory, reasoning, language ...) and makes the patient become dependent, gradually, for the development of their daily life activities.

A welter of feelings (uncertainty, fear, denial, etc.) would happen from that moment. If these doubts and situations they are not dealt and assume as produced by the disease, they can perpetually destabilize the family system, the life of the primary caregiver, and cause the so-called "caregiver syndrome" (physical and mental fatigue).

When we are responsible for the care of our patient we do not think about the short, medium and long term changes that will occur in our life and environment. The changes that may result could be:

- Changes in family relationships (assuming new tasks, conflicts ...)
- Changes in the economic or work situation (absenteeism, abandonment, increased costs ...)
- Changes in leisure time (decreased leisure, family and friends time ... AND TO ONESELF)
- Changes in health (fatigue, sleep disturbances ...)
- Changes in mood (fear, guilt, worry, sadness, anxiety ...)

There are families that when they have to face a problematic situation, such as the illness of a loved one, that could unite them more, but it can also happen that the family unit could break. In the Alzheimer's disease the patient needs supervision (at the beginning) and then he/she will need assistance 24 hours a day. Therefore we must prepare, together, working the whole family as a team, so the patient and the family, especially the main caregiver, have a quality of life and they won't have to abandon or at least have the fewest changes in their life projects.

When the role of main caregiver is assumed, sometimes it's imposed others it's by choice; there is no knowledge of what is going to happen most of the time (not even in theory) to the loved one which suffers from dementia. Considering there is no really knowledge of the

disease, because every person is individual, and the patient is a person, because evolution is variable, and symptomatology can be manifested differently in each person.

We must be aware that for the care of the patient in any of the phases, the main caregiver has to manifest good physical and mental health, in order to prevent the aforementioned "caregiver syndrome".

It is very important to be informed and trained in all the aspects this disease affects and ask for help when you need it; psychological, social or family support for the care of the patient, so that he can rest and also do activities outside the disease's environment.

We must learn to take care, realizing that it is necessary to devote time to themselves, that we must set limits to care, thinking about the future. And to take care of our own health, doing exercise or something relaxing, learning to relax to avoid or minimize catastrophic reactions before critical moments.

And above all we need to learn to ask for help, both family and friends (who participate in the patient's care, or emotional support for the caregiver), as public institutions, organizations and associations of relatives of Alzheimer patients; which can provide information, advice and support to caregivers, and where you can participate in something so interesting and beneficial to the caregiver and Groups of Mutual Aid, where in an intimate and confidential space they can share with other caregivers of Alzheimer's personal experiences, feelings, and is a learning space and emotional release.

No need to feel guilty about leaving a gap, a time in the care of our loved one and devote to oneself and the other members of the family; the care will have then much love and peace, preventing moments of nervousness and fatalism; that can directly affect the quality of life of the patient, caregiver and the family.

The essential to face our enemy (Alzheimer's) is to know who it is. So from this website, we want to offer basic information to know what happens to your loved one, understand it and try to take the best you can with love, dignity and naturalness.