

## Supporting the Other Parent After an Alzheimer's Diagnosis

When Mom is given an Alzheimer's disease diagnosis, she receives a great deal of attention and care. But what about Dad? After learning about his spouse's diagnosis, he needs support, too.

Jane Sadowsky-Emmerth, RN, associate clinical director of Partners in Care, a division of the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, speaks with us about how to provide both emotional and practical support to a parent after the other parent has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's.



### 5 Tips for Coping and Supporting a Parent After an Alzheimer's Diagnosis

Mom may be devastated by [her Alzheimer's diagnosis](#), but she's not alone in the struggle. After all, when one person is affected, the whole family feels the impact. In fact, "an Alzheimer's diagnosis can sometimes cause more stress for family caregivers than for the person receiving the diagnosis," says Sadowsky-Emmerth.

That's why Dad needs your help now more than ever.

Here are five ways to support him in the days, weeks and months [after Mom's diagnosis](#):

#### 1. Be honest.

You may be tempted to sugarcoat the situation in order to shield Dad from pain, but that will only delay his acceptance of the facts. Instead, Sadowsky-Emmerth encourages families to acknowledge the realities of life with Alzheimer's, no matter how difficult.

#### 2. Discourage the blame game.

Dad may have been frustrated with Mom for years because of early symptoms of undiagnosed Alzheimer's and is now feeling guilty about his reactions and wondering what he could have done to [prevent the diagnosis](#). If that's the case, gently remind him that he is not to blame, says Sadowsky-Emmerth. Mom's diagnosis is not Dad's fault.

#### 3. Encourage self-care.

"Separation, even for a few minutes or hours, can be difficult for the spouse of someone with Alzheimer's who may not want them to leave," says Sadowsky-Emmerth. But as hard as it may be, remind Dad that it's critical to take time for himself. Even something as simple as a walk around the block can help him feel refreshed and recharged.

#### 4. Provide respite care.

In order to help Dad get some alone time, offer to take care of Mom for a few hours or even a whole weekend. Your visits can provide him with a much-needed break from the [stress of caregiving](#). "Offering to cook a meal, do laundry, or stay home with Mom while Dad takes a fitness class or enjoys a weekend away can help him reclaim a sense of well-being," explains Sadowsky-Emmerth.

#### 5. Seek professional help.

If Dad is struggling to provide the assistance and care that Mom needs, consider working together to secure home care services. Home health aides can help Mom with activities of daily living (ADLs) such as bathing, dressing and eating, easing the emotional and physical burden of caregiving. You may also wish to start the [search for a memory care community](#) that can best meet Mom's needs.

Ultimately, when seeking to [support your parents](#), your presence may be the best gift you can offer.

"Caring for someone with Alzheimer's can feel very lonely at times, especially when shared memories begin to fade," says Sadowsky-Emmerth.

*Through regular phone calls and visits, you can ease Dad's fear, frustration and loneliness and [support both your parents](#) as they navigate life with Alzheimer's.*