

Quick Tips:

Environment is Important!

While it's difficult to redesign a house for home care, there are many things that you can control in the environment. Learn to pay close attention to the following things:

Common Areas

- Don't rearrange the furniture just to "change the look."
- Keep walking paths clutter-free.
- Keep the noise level low – turn off the TV if it's just on for background sound. If you want to keep the radio on, keep it turned to an easy listening station – no rock or country unless that's what your loved one prefers – and keep it low.
- Don't talk too loudly. Never shout down the hall or across the room unless it's an emergency.
- When children and pets come to visit, monitor your loved one closely. Most older people will enjoy visits from children and pets, but some may become agitated or restless. Move those people to a quiet place, and give them time to settle. Ask guests to keep their visiting children supervised at all times; children should never be allowed to run or yell in the house.

Individual Rooms

- Keep things of your loved one on display. It can be frustrating to keep setting up a room, but it is worth it if doing so helps the person identify his room, and stay out of other peoples' rooms.
- During the day, keep light levels on high. Studies show that bright indoor lights can mimic the effect of sunlight on the body, helping a person be more wakeful during the day, and sleep better at night.
- If your loved one tends to become more agitated or restless in the evening, try lowering the lights and stopping activities for an hour in the afternoon. This rest period may be all that's needed to calm and soothe a person with dementia, preventing the "sundowning."
- At night, keep on only a small nightlight. When doing night checks, use a flashlight – don't turn on the overhead lights. Overhead lights on at night can fool the individuals' bodies into thinking its day, disrupting their sleep. Keep hallway lights on low at night, also, but on high during the day.

General Atmosphere and Environment

- Keep your voice calm and relaxed all the time. Try not to let your own worries, concerns or anxieties show in your voice.
- Do your best to create a sense of home in everything you do. Avoid taking the medical or institutional approach.
- If you are rushed or in a hurry, people will sense this, and may respond by becoming restless or anxious. Relax; try to take your time with your loved one, even when you're busy or have a lot of work to complete. It will save you lots of work in the long run.
- Try approaching all tasks as an "activity." Have fun with bathing, dressing and grooming tasks but adding conversation, singing or music at the same time. Remember, these one-on-one moments are your chance to add quality to your loved one's life, and joy to their day.
- Use music often. Music touches our soul, and can soothe a confused, distressed mind.

Keep in mind that people with memory loss or dementia experience stress easier than people without. You can lower the level of stress and distress by being aware of the environment, and using that awareness to bring calm, comfort and a sense of security to their lives.