

Care Partner Tips for Coping with Behavior Changes in Lewy Body Dementia

Be honest with yourself. One of the most important things you can do when acting as a caregiver is to be honest with yourself and the situation. It is easy to try to deny the difficult realities that dementia can bring. However, when your loved one starts to show serious signs of dementia, it can be most helpful to educate yourself and discuss concerns with your loved one, medical providers, and those who support you.

Don't argue. Dementia can be difficult to support – especially when disagreements arise. Often, arguing with your loved one can cause many hurt feelings both for them and for yourself. Understand that providing a logical explanation or trying to prove a point to correct is not helpful. Stop. Breathe deeply and remember it is the disease talking. When this happens, try to connect with them in other ways, respond to needs, and move on from the argument.

Be patient. This may seem like an obvious but key point that many caregivers can unfortunately forget. It can be very heartbreaking when a loved one does not remember you. Remain calm and take time to privately experience the emotions that may surface. They do not have control of the changes to their memory and thinking – as this is an unfortunate side effect of their condition.

Stay present and available. When a loved one experiences changes to their thinking, memory, or relationships – it can require the care partner to adjust to remain present and available. It is important to remember that although changes may be present – it remains important to maintain support, shared experiences, and interaction. It can often be helpful to continue activities that are enjoyed – however, there may be ways to adjust the activity to fit the ability in those moments.

Don't forget to take care of yourself. This can often feel like an impossible task to many caregivers. It can be very overwhelming physically, mentally, and emotionally. However, it is important to find small ways to continue to do so. This may look quite different as time and availability may shift – but remain flexible and find moments of joy, respite, peace, and comfort. **The better you take care of yourself, the better caregiver you will be for your loved one.**

Form a support network. One of the best ways that you can help prevent care partner strain is to surround yourself with people. Having a strong network of family and friends can help you get the support that you need. You can also reach out to your doctor and healthcare team for ongoing support as you deal with the struggles and frustrations of being a care partner.

