

Helping adults with dementia while sheltering in place

With many adult day care services on hold, restricted, or cancelled, taking care of a loved with dementia can be challenging. Dr. Ken Hepburn, director of the Roybal Center for Dementia Family Caregiving Mastery and Core Director of the Emory University Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, has some advice. He stresses that you should remind yourself that the person you love is still there. Remember, it is the illness preventing them from understanding or connecting with you and even themselves. He also recommends "thinking like a clinician" when it comes to managing behavioral problems. To think like a clinician, you need follow four steps.

- **Assess the situation.** Stand back, look around, and get a feel for what exactly is going on. If your loved one is anxious, bored, sad, or uptight, do not blame the person or make assumptions. Instead see if you can figure out what is causing the problem.
- **Make a plan.** Figure out what might work to make the situation better. Plan to be mindful. Think about what you know the person likes, what they used to be good at, and/or what calms them. Use these things to help soothe, redirect, or engage them. Keep in mind that you can better help your loved one succeed if you tailor the activity to fit their current ability.
- **Implement.** Try out your plan.
- **Evaluate.** See what happened, and learn from it. Pay attention to what happens and how your loved one reacts. If it worked, remember this for next time. If it didn't work, learn from it. That way, you can plan differently, and try something new next time. It may be as simple as learning you need to provide more guidance, instruction, and encouragement.

These guiding principles can empower caregivers. They can help you do something proactive while embracing your loved one's sense of personhood.

Reference:

Hepburn, K. (2020). Strategies to enhance family care for persons living with dementia in a time of COVID-19. [National Webinar sponsored by the University of Minnesota]. Retrieved from https://mediaspace.umn.edu/media/t/1_r5rztg3o?st=13

Source:

Amy Kostelic, Adult Development and Aging Specialist, summarized this information release from Dr. Ken Hepburn's national webinar on April 17, 2020, sponsored by the University of Minnesota. Hepburn is a well-respected and well-known gerontologist from Emory University. Hepburn is the Director of the Roybal Center for Dementia Family Caregiving Mastery and the Core Director of the Emory University Alzheimer's Disease Research Center. You can view the webinar at https://mediaspace.umn.edu/media/t/1_r5rztg3o?st=13