

Ambiguous Loss and Grief

Strategies for living positively with ambiguous loss and grief

There are many steps you can take to live positively with your losses and grief while caring for someone with dementia:

- ✓ **Reflect** on the losses that occur in the life of the person with dementia and your own life too. Acknowledge, express and share the grief you feel in response to those losses with a person or people whom you know will understand and be supportive.
- ✓ **Normalize** and begin to accept your feelings of ambiguous loss and grief by talking to other caregivers who feel the same emotions and go through a similar experience, as well as Alzheimer Society staff who support people with dementia and their caregivers.
- ✓ **Stay connected** to family and friends. Strengthen existing relationships, and be open to building new relationships with others who can be supportive and enhance your life amid the loss and grief.
- ✓ **Look after your own needs.** Stay physically active, eat as well as possible, and do what you need to relieve stress. Take breaks from care. These things will boost your health and morale, and help you to make better decisions and be more effective as a caregiver.
- ✓ **Let your family and friends know how they can help,** rather than assuming people know what you need.
- ✓ **Seek out information about dementia and what to expect.** Talk to others who are caregivers at different stages of the journey. This knowledge gives you more ideas and information about how best to cope with the disease and plan for the future.
- ✓ **Seek out support** from family and friends, professional organizations such as the Alzheimer Society, a professional counsellor, and/or participate in support groups.
- ✓ **Share your own experience** and contribute by helping others in a similar situation.
- ✓ **Get involved and volunteer** with your local Alzheimer Society. Learn how to advocate for your own needs and the needs of your family member or friend with the disease.
- ✓ **Express grief in creative ways** through writing, painting, photography or other art forms.
- ✓ **Recognize and value your growth as a person,** which resulted from caring for a family member with dementia. You may have learned new skills, such as handling finances, become more compassionate, or developed an inner strength and resilience you didn't realize you had.