

Dementia and emotions

When a loved one has dementia, it can trigger strong emotions such as guilt, denial and grief. Find out what could be causing these feelings and get expert tips to help you cope.

1 Guilt

There are several reasons you might be feeling guilty. These include:

- feeling like you're failing as a carer
- resenting your caring responsibilities
- reconsidering a promise such as not moving the person into a care home
- getting frustrated or angry as their behaviour or personality change
- being unable to be with them 24/7 or needing time away

Dementia specialist Admiral Nurse Vic says, “The first step is to accept you're feeling guilty, then find ways to reduce that guilt. For example, if you feel resentful of your caring responsibilities, can you arrange for a carer to visit once a week or ask family members for more help? They may not realise how much you're doing.”

Find out if you can apply for **any benefits** that would help you in your caring role, and ask your GP or social services to recommend local carers' support groups. Most of all, make time for yourself; you cannot care for others if you become unwell or feel overwhelmed.

“I used to see Gran every day, but now I have a young child, I'm unable to see her as much. I feel so guilty. Calling the Helpline and having a professional say, ‘It's okay. This is normal,’ was so good to hear.”

Ricky, who helps care for his gran who has dementia



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Denial

Denial is a common emotion in dementia. The person showing symptoms such as memory loss or tiredness may not want to acknowledge them, while family members could explain them away as stress or getting older rather than facing the possibility that it could be dementia.

“This fear is understandable,” says Admiral Nurse Gary. “Your loved one may be frightened about getting a diagnosis and what it means for their future. Family members, including you, may not want to upset them or worry that saying something could change your relationship.”

But it’s important for everyone to acknowledge what’s happening. Avoiding a diagnosis can delay getting the right treatment and support, while putting off planning for the future (like setting up lasting power of attorney) can cause problems later on.

Gary says, “If your family is struggling, please call our free Helpline on 0800 888 6678 or [book an appointment](#) in our virtual clinic.”



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Grief

When someone you love is diagnosed with dementia, you may feel a sense of loss before they’ve died. This is called anticipatory grief and is totally normal.

You might experience feelings of grief and loss when:

- your relationship starts to change
- you no longer recognise the person they used to be
- your loved one is no longer physically or mentally present – for example if they’ve moved into a care home or can no longer communicate

“Every new stage of dementia could trigger anticipatory grief,” says Admiral Nurse Vic. “But even if you do experience this type of grief, the person’s death may still come as a shock, leaving you unprepared for the pain you feel.”

Admiral Nurses agree that it’s vital to enjoy the time you do have together. You can make new memories, such as visiting a tourist attraction you’ve always wanted to, or take comfort in revisiting old memories by looking at photos or videos.

If you’re finding it hard to manage your emotions, please contact us – no one has to face dementia alone.



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