

## 10 Tips to Dealing with Family Conflict

Alzheimer's disease/related dementia should be considered a family condition. The reality is that the disease will impact the family in ways that may have never been thought about. Unless multiple family members are involved in the daily care of a person living with dementia, the reality is they probably don't fully understand the impact on the person or the primary caregiver (who is usually a spouse or adult child). When the condition is not understood, the family will continue to function as they always had – sometimes helpful and sometimes not! And, if the primary caregiver is not fully open about the situation, it is very likely that family members will not come to your aid. Not because they don't want to – it's because they don't know they need to.

In married couples, the well spouse may think it's not the kids' problem or they don't want to interfere with their lives. Sometimes, there is a sense that other family members should know that help is needed but it is not offered. Regardless of the situation, it is important to clearly communicate with family members to avoid conflict that can be caused by an unfortunate condition – dementia.

Consider these 10 tips to help you avoid conflicts:

1. Schedule regular family meetings, either in person, over the phone or by email so everyone is kept updated on how things are going. Be open about how the situation may be changing and where you could use help.
2. Find a good time to communicate with family members. If you need to talk to someone don't do it while they're in the middle of something else. Always ask, "Is this a good time?" before diving in with a heavy topic.
3. Be honest. Let your family know you are feeling stressed, overwhelmed, scared, sad, etc. These are normal emotions and families can better support you if they know how you are feeling.
4. Never assume anything. When asking for help, be specific and clear about your needs to avoid misunderstandings. Write down tasks so everyone is clear about expectations.
5. Share responsibility. When everyone has a task or responsibility (however small) a sense of teamwork is shared.
6. If a family member refuses to provide help, don't waste your time being angry at that person. Let it go and stay focused and positive on the family members who help you!
7. When times get tough, remind each other that it is the disease that has caused the challenge. Blame the disease, not the person with the disease (or each other) for the hard times.
8. If you are the main caregiver, get some respite! Taking a break from your daily duties can boost your spirits and in turn, help you be a better communicator.
9. Stay open to new ideas and opinions. Don't judge. There is more than one way to provide care for someone.
10. Attend a support group with family members or seek private counseling if you fear relationships are about to be torn apart.