
Taking Mum out and then returning her to the home.

Posted by Sally - 01/03/2010 17:22

Hi This is my 1st time on the forum. Mum has just gone into a high care dementia ward. My family and I were wondering if we should continue to take Mum on outings etc - outside of the nursing home. The reason being is that she really enjoys it while she is out but then gets so much more confused and upset when we take her back - getting upset that she cannot remember where she lives/the layout of the ward or the people.

Thanks, Sally

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Re:Taking Mum out and then returning her to the home.

Posted by HellenFisher DCA Team - 02/03/2010 14:22

Thanks for your post Sally and I certainly encourage you to make more use of our forums - they are great for getting in contact with others.

I think that it is important that you continue to take your Mum out - she obviously really enjoys her time with you and your family. Establishing a regular routine for when she returns to the home may form part of the answer to your challenge. Taking the time to ease her back into the care environment may help address some of her distress and confusion.

Ensure you have plenty of time at the end of your day out. Perhaps in the car you can talk about what normal activities will be happening when you get back, or have a discussion about what may be on the menu for dinner. This will hopefully begin to orientate her back to home before you even get there.

If possible, spend some time with her upon arrival, perhaps walk her to her room, do a quick tour of the main living areas, and keep your conversation positive and chatty to enable her to feel settled in. You may find that you will need to do this every time as she may not remember having it done previously. I would also ensure that you do not rush the process as stress is the No.1 enemy of memory and this process may be undermined if you rush or get frustrated at repeating yourself.

I can understand that you may find her distress upsetting, but outings can provide such a fantastic change of scene for the person with dementia. Even if your Mum does not remember specific details of outings, she is sure to remember the positive interactions that happen during these times. This can only benefit her social and emotional wellbeing.

You may find some handy communication hints in our article, 5 Universal Emotional Needs.

Do any other members have a special insight into this challenge? Feel free to share your experiences.

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Re:Taking Mum out and then returning her to the home.

Posted by Mim - 12/03/2010 18:39

I would agree with all of those things Hellen. Thank you so much for your wise words. Your help with my despair on my post of a few weeks ago was invaluable and appreciated so much! I haven't been able to reply since then, but today I've caught up a bit.

Mum is still in the Mental Health Unit, and is still up and down, but we're working on solutions. One of the things we've continued to do is to take Mum out for outings with the family. In our case, that is quite difficult at times, because of Mum's behaviour while we're out, but we persevere, because as Hellen said, while I know Mum might not specifically remember the occasion, the experience of family definitely stays with her.

Sally, our experience has been that we need to allow extra time when we return, as Hellen said, as Mum is always frightened and unsure about where she is, and doesn't want me to leave. It's always about not knowing where to go, or where to sit, or not knowing anyone, which is distressing for me and her, but contrary to well-meaning family members who have said we shouldn't take her out for that reason, I know how important it is for her to have the outing. I usually sit with her and try to reassure her until she's calm, but if that doesn't work, I just tell one of the lovely staff and they will sit with her to reassure her. I've gone through this for about 9 months now, since she first went in to care. Perhaps some people adjust, but it hasn't happened with Mum - we just have to have lots of patience and give her lots of love!

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Re:Taking Mum out and then returning her to the home.

Posted by sandrina - 13/03/2010 01:12

Hi! I have been reading through the posts on this subject and thought I would add a story. In January I moved my mum to an assisted living retirement residence, where she has settled in quite well, and as her only daughter I take her out as often as possible. She loves to go out to the local pub, or to an art gallery, or to the movies, and I felt great about being able to take her. At some point, however, I guess she began to wander about the residence at night looking for me, and the care director advised me that perhaps I was taking her out too much and that she got more confused this way. I was devastated! After all, I felt that as long as she could get out, she should. One day in particular I had taken her to a small, cozy pub for a beer and some fries and it was a lovely spring-like day with the sun beaming down, and when we left we were walking down the street and I started to sing, in full voice, just for the joy of it. I started singing an old Beatles tune (Till there was you) which my mum knew well, and she chimed in too, and we walked down the street, arm in arm, singing our hearts out. Unbeknownst to us, there was a woman sitting on her upper floor balcony who heard us and she began to clap and shouted down to us that we had made her day. Well, that made my mum's day, I can tell you. So, I have been very happy to discover the tips in this forum for making the transition from outings to home again easier, and I will try them out this weekend, as we head off to see Alice in Wonderland! Thanks for all the information -- this is truly an incredible site.

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Re:Taking Mum out and then returning her to the home.

Posted by bfitto - 21/03/2010 13:17

Hi I have been reading through the posts and as a Diversional Therapist in a Dementia Unit I encourage you all to continue taking your mum's and dad's out. I understand how hard it is for families to just stop taking their relatives out and leave them at the home. How easy that is for all. The lady that was told not to take her mum out too often needs to be shot. That's disgusting. I have a lot of residents that are under guardianship and have no one and I also have ones that feel it is too much. Sometimes we try too hard for them to remember things which can confuse them more and distress them more. Just take each moment and cherish the time you have remaining. The staff at the home should help but yes try and stay a little while when you return instead of just dropping and run. The same as I tell the other staff we are here for the residents and although residents get more confused and their behaviours change it is our job to help divert their behaviours to a more less stressful behaviour. Hang in there to you all and if you are not getting the support from the staff or other family members. Try and talk things through for the sake of your family member.

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Re:Taking Mum out and then returning her to the home.

Posted by sandrina - 23/03/2010 02:56

Absolutely -- I take my mum out as often as possible, and I have been following the advice of staying a little longer once we return. It does seem to help, and as you say, it is their job to deal with certain behaviours, not to imprison them! I must say I had the same reaction as you, so I have persevered and will continue to get my mum out in the world as much as she is able and for as long as she is able. Thanks for the note of support. It is very sad to see that many of the other people at the residence seem to have been forgotten.

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Re:Taking Mum out and then returning her to the home.

Posted by Kiwijuls - 09/08/2010 22:57

Hi there, this is my first time on the forum. My mum is in a rest home and has increasing dementia. Recently when I took her out for lunch, she became anxious about where she lived, and I was unable to distract her from that worry. It became such a worry to her that she did not enjoy the time out, and when we returned to the resthome she refused to get out of the car declaring that she did not live there, only worked there during the week. I was told by her to take her home. What she meant by home was where she was raised as a young child. As I felt that by trying to get her out of the car, she may become violent, such as her aggression, I opted to take her for another drive and we went up to where she used to live. This unfortunately made her become more confused, but allowed me to return her to the resthome a little more easily. Interestingly, as soon as she walked through the door of the rest home, it was like a light switch, and all her worries seemed to disappear. Should I be concerned about this, and what is the best way to deal with this sort of thing should it happen again? As I live in Australia, and my Mum is in a rest home in NZ, I don't get to visit with her as often as I would like. Does anyone have any suggestions? Thanks, Julie-Ann

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Re:Taking Mum out and then returning her to the home.

Posted by HellenFisher DCA Team - 12/08/2010 10:42

Welcome to the forums Kiwijuls!

I am sure you have found the other member's advice in this thread useful.

The desire to return 'home' is a powerful emotion. For most people, regardless of dementia, home represents unconditional love, security, and a feeling of self-worth. In the absence of 'home', distress is a normal reaction to feeling displaced.

Many unmet emotional needs can lie behind the desire to return 'home'. These may include: to feel needed and useful, to be able to care, to love and be loved, to have one's self esteem boosted, and to have the power to choose. I would suggest you read the article, Sundown Syndrome, while not exactly what your mother is experiencing, it does explain why many people with dementia become adamant about 'going home' even if they are still residing in the family residence or just out for the day!

You may also find our articles, 5 Universal Emotional Needs interesting. As previously suggested in this thread, you could ease her through the transition by chatting about people and familiar places within the facility before returning. If she does become distressed, be patient and do not try to force the situation. Going for another short drive or walk may be just the thing to settle her a bit more before returning to the home. Use trial and error to see what makes her feel settled and reassured. You have a great positive attitude and the main thing is to persist and continue to enjoy your outings together.

Post edited by: HellenFisher DCA Team, at: 12/08/2010 10:43

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