



Spirituality and Dementia

Reconnecting With Your Loved One

Alzheimer's disease causes severe impairment in the functioning of the brain and results in loss of memory, changes in mood and personality and ultimately, an inability to communicate and perform the basic activities of daily living. It seems unlikely that such a person could participate in or benefit from what we typically think of as "spiritual care." Helping to maintain a connection with their religion, which can also include relationship with others, has the potential to increase a person's sense of well-being.

As we spend time with our loved ones who have dementia, our goal is to connect them with whatever has meaning for them. Here are some ways to connect spiritually with those we love:

- **Recognize and believe that every person has an intact soul.**
- **Be there.** Simply sit without expectation or pressure. Your presence is the best source of spirituality. Let them know they are loved.
- **See things from their perspective.** It may be a world of confusion, suffering, or hallucinations but it is their world.

- **Be an active listener.** *To love someone is to listen to their stories* no matter how many times they tell them. Listen to their hopes, fears, pain, joy, and anger. Listen free of judgment, correction, or advice. Use phrases that encourage them to talk and give affirmation to what they are saying. Don't use phrases like "don't say that" or "you shouldn't feel that way".
- **Stimulate their memory.** Bring memory provoking items that appeal to the senses such as: personal pictures, Sunday School songs, much loved items, favorite Bible verses/stories, and "see and touch" story books.
- **Pray with them.** A phrase that we hear a lot is "pray for me". People with dementia are often mentally unable to pray for themselves but are comforted with prayer.

It is important to respect the dignity and wholeness of every person, regardless of their level of cognitive function. Be steadfast in the search to

connect with your loved one—the trial and error is well worth the effort.

For further ideas to connect with your loved one with dementia, contact Family LifeCare at 1-800-355-2817. ✉

