

# **Building Your Skills for Dementia Care: A Person Centered Approach**

## **Understanding Behavioral Changes**

**Definition, Causes and Responses**

## About the Alzheimer's Association

### **Our mission:**

The Alzheimer's Association is the leading voluntary health organization in Alzheimer's care, support and research. Our mission is to eliminate Alzheimer's disease through the advancement of research; to provide and enhance care and support for all affected; and to reduce the risk of dementia through the promotion of brain health.

**Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's disease<sup>®</sup>.**

800.272.3900 | [alz.org](http://alz.org)<sup>®</sup>

alzheimer's  association<sup>®</sup>

# Objectives

- **State symptoms of dementia diseases.**
- **State behaviors that are a result of dementia diseases .**
- **Define and evaluate possible causes of behavioral issues.**
- **Practice possible interventions and responses for behavioral issues.**

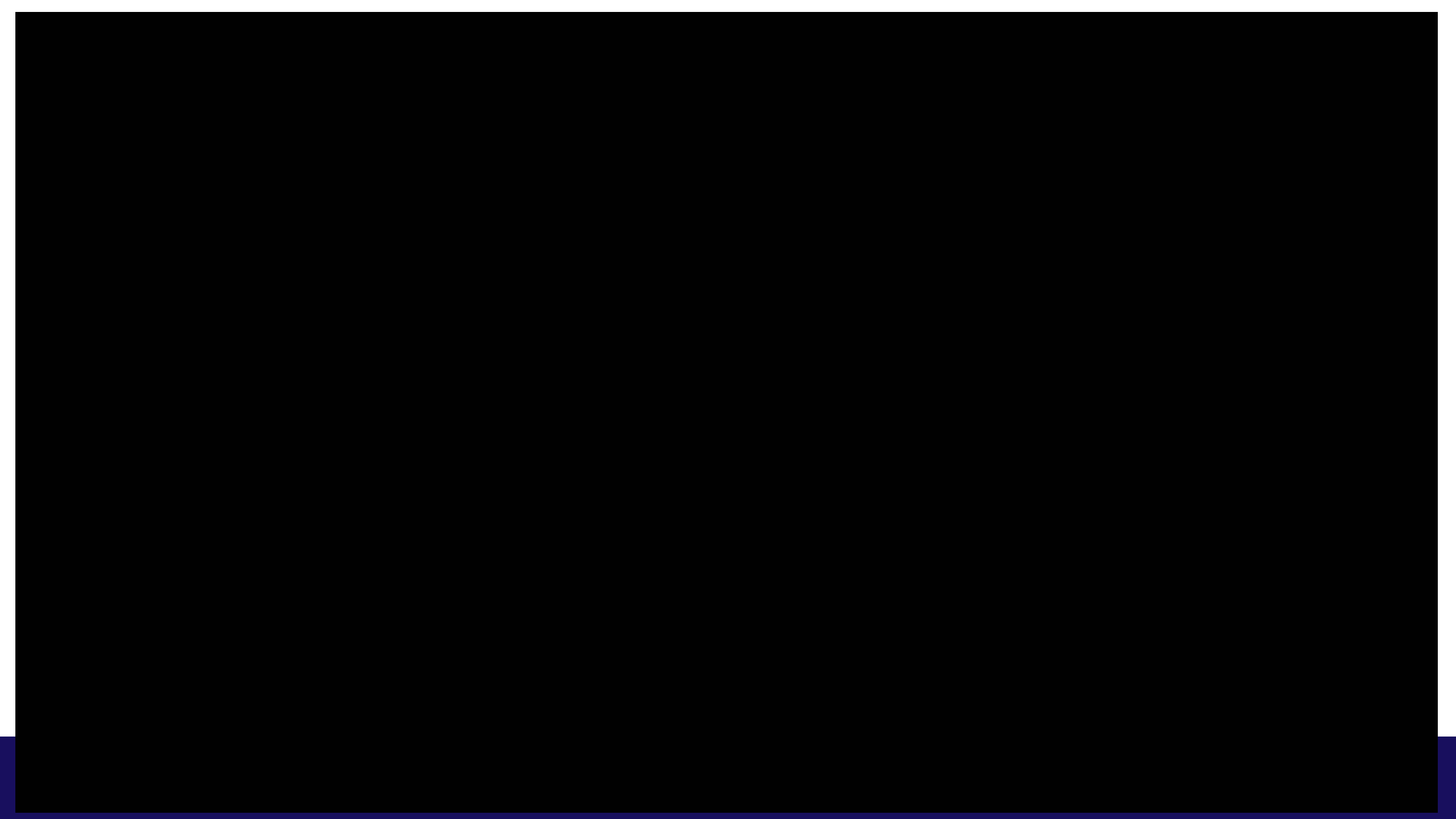
# **People with Dementia type diseases, Alzheimer's especially, experience:**

- Short term memory loss**
- Difficulty performing familiar tasks**
- Problems finding the right words**
- Disorientation to time and place**
- Poor or decreased judgment**
- Misplacing things**
- Changes in mood or behavior**

# ***Behavior may be Communication***

- **They may be unable to express their thoughts, feelings and physical needs.**
- **What cannot be said by the person with dementia may be demonstrated through actions.**
- **Behavior expresses fear, frustration, pain; the inability to make unmet needs known.**

**OUR communication techniques  
and the approach for care  
may be  
a PRIMARY cause of the behavioral  
issue.**



# Build a Relationship of Trust

- Get to know the person
- Be a friend
- Know his schedule
- Respond with the person's needs in a timely manner
- Provide dignity



**A person with dementia type  
diseases is in THEIR reality.**

**GO with them where they are.**

**Don't argue or try to reason with the person.**

**A person with a dementia disease is unable to be rational and make judgment decisions in accordance with OUR reality.**

# **We can contribute to a person's self-worth and decrease the challenging behavior by:**

- **Evaluating the cause for the behavior**
- **Enhancing our communication techniques**
- **Changing our approach**
- **Allowing her to participate in her care**
- **Allowing choices**
- **Providing a routine schedule**
- **Caring about her feelings**

**When there is an escalation in  
behavior, ask yourself:**

**Is the behavior  
a danger or safety issue to  
you, the person or others?**

# Identifying and Documenting the Cause

- Apply the ABC Approach
  - Antecedent
  - Behavior
  - Consequences
- Care Logs

# Remember to ask these questions....

1. Is the behavior a danger or safety risk to you, the person or to others?
2. Have you evaluated and documented the situation?
3. Is this behavior a part of the disease or is there another cause?



**Some behaviors are a result of the  
disease.....**

# Wandering



Usually, the person is confused about where he is and is looking for something familiar.

# Wandering: Possible Causes

- **Physical discomfort**
- **Medications**
- **Hallucinations**
- **Sundown Syndrome**
- **Insufficient exercise**
- **Environmental**

# Wandering Strategies

- **Redirect pacing or restless behavior.**
- **Schedule exercise activities.**
- **Reassure the person, knowing the person and his likes and dislikes.**
- **Reduce noise levels and confusion.**
- **Consult the doctor if disorientation is becoming a problem.**
- **Provide relaxation opportunities.**

# Sundown Syndrome



- Is a part of the disease
- Usually occurs in the late afternoon around 4:00 PM. But may also occur in the early morning
- There is no medical treatment for or to manage this behavior

# Sundowning Strategies

- **Schedule**
- **Plan structured, quiet activity for the afternoon & evening hours**
- **Daylight lighting in the morning or late afternoon**
- **Use a night light**
- **Close the blinds or drapes**
- **Allow them to pace whenever possible**
- **Use reassuring verbal cues in gentle, loving tones**

# Hallucinations, Delusions and Paranoia

- Hallucinations are sensory experiences which cannot be verified by anyone else.
- Delusions are persistent incorrect beliefs that remain fixed despite all rational evidence to the contrary.
- Paranoia is an unfounded or exaggerated distrust of others, sometimes reaching delusional proportions.

# Hallucinations, Delusions and Paranoia: Possible Causes

- **Unable to interpret dreams and surroundings**
- **Physical illness**
- **Dehydration**
- **Medications**
- **Fatigue**
- **Sensory impairment caused by the disease**



# Hallucinations, Delusions and Paranoia: Strategies

- Acknowledge what he imagines he is seeing.
- Be in her reality.
- Talk to her about her family and childhood.
- If they are afraid of an object, remove the object.
- If something is “missing”, help them find it.

# Sexual Behaviors

- **Individuals can continue to have sexual feelings throughout life.**
- **Sexual behavior is not inappropriate just because it is engaged in by elderly or impaired people.**

# Sexual Behavior: Possible causes

- **Unable to control behavior and remember correct social skills**
- **Need for affection and touching**
- **Need for tactile stimulation**
- **Need to be toileted**
- **A rash**
- **Disrobing**

# Sexual Behavior: Strategies

- **Be matter-of-fact**
- **Distract or redirect**

**Just because the person has dementia does not mean that he/she doesn't have the physical need to be touched, hugged, etc.**

# Rummaging, Hoarding and Pillaging

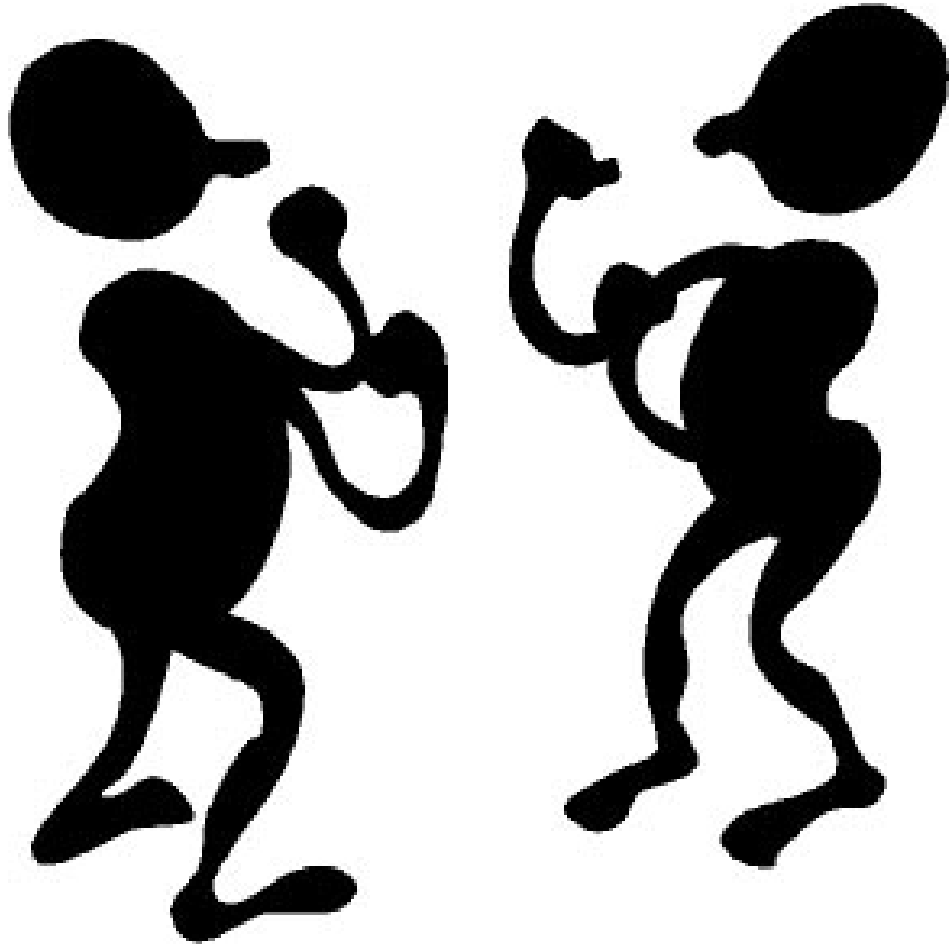


- Looking for the familiar.
- Looking for things that give them security.
- Looking for things that he/she feels is valuable.

# Rummaging, Hoarding and Pillaging: Strategies

- **SAFETY is the primary concern!**
- **Build trust to allow you to make changes**
- **Control access to restricted areas**
- **Monitor behavior and subtly remove excess**
- **Simplify & organize the person's room/space**
- **Minimize the number of hiding spaces**
- **Check wastebaskets for "lost items"**
- **Understand individual's coping mechanisms**

# Other behaviors that may be observed:



- Agitation
- Demanding or aggressive behavior
- Cursing and insulting comments

# Aggressive Behavior

- **Resistant to care**
- **Demanding behavior**
- **Anxious**
- **Pacing**
- **Repetitive action**



# Aggressive Behavior: Possible Causes

- Approach and communication techniques used by the care partner
- Losing control over his life
- Boredom
- Medication toxicity
- Infection
- Dehydrated
- Fatigue, lack of sleep
- Seeking Attention

# Verbally Aggressive

- Curse words and insulting comments
- The person may be struggling to find the “right” words.
  - Physical damage to the brain
- Difficulty expressing her feelings of frustration
  - Physical discomfort
  - Attempting to maintain control of her life

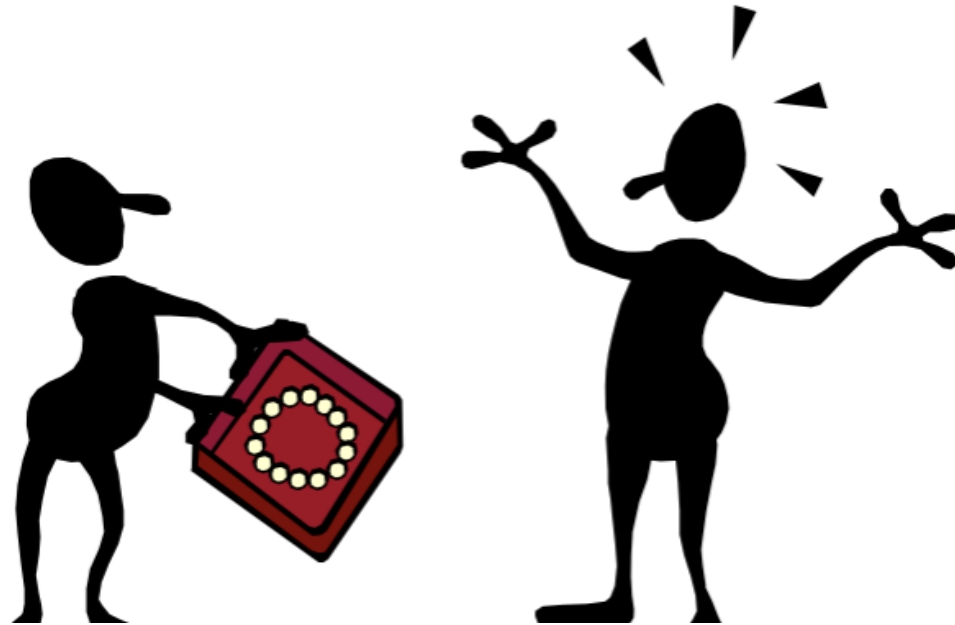
# Aggressive Behavior: Strategies

- **Speak softly and directly to the person.**
- **Try to determine what is wanted or needed.**
- **Validate their feelings, then distract or redirect.**
- **Provide the person with a “time-out” away from you.**
- **Let the person play out the aggression safely.**
- **Get help from others.**
- **Don’t take the aggressiveness personally.**

# The best response to aggression is **PREVENTION!**

- Stay calm
- Don't force or restrain
- Allow the individual some control
- Leave and come back later
- Simplify the task
- Include rest periods
- Always tell the person what you are going to do
- Try a different approach

**Every day has its own surprises.  
Be flexible and learn to go with the  
flow!**



# Questions?

# 24/7 Helpline

- Free Service
- Available around the clock, 365 days a year
- Helpline specialists and master's level clinicians offer confidential support and information
- Bilingual staff and translation service in over 200 languages
- Live Chat available
- TTY Service 866.403.3073



24/7 Helpline

**800.272.3900**

alzheimer's  association®



Live Chat

# Virtual Programs

- Free online e-learnings available at [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org)
  - 10 Warning Signs
  - Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia
  - Dementia Conversations
  - Effective Communication Strategies
  - Legal and Financial Planning
  - Understanding and Responding to Dementia-Related Behaviors
  - And more!



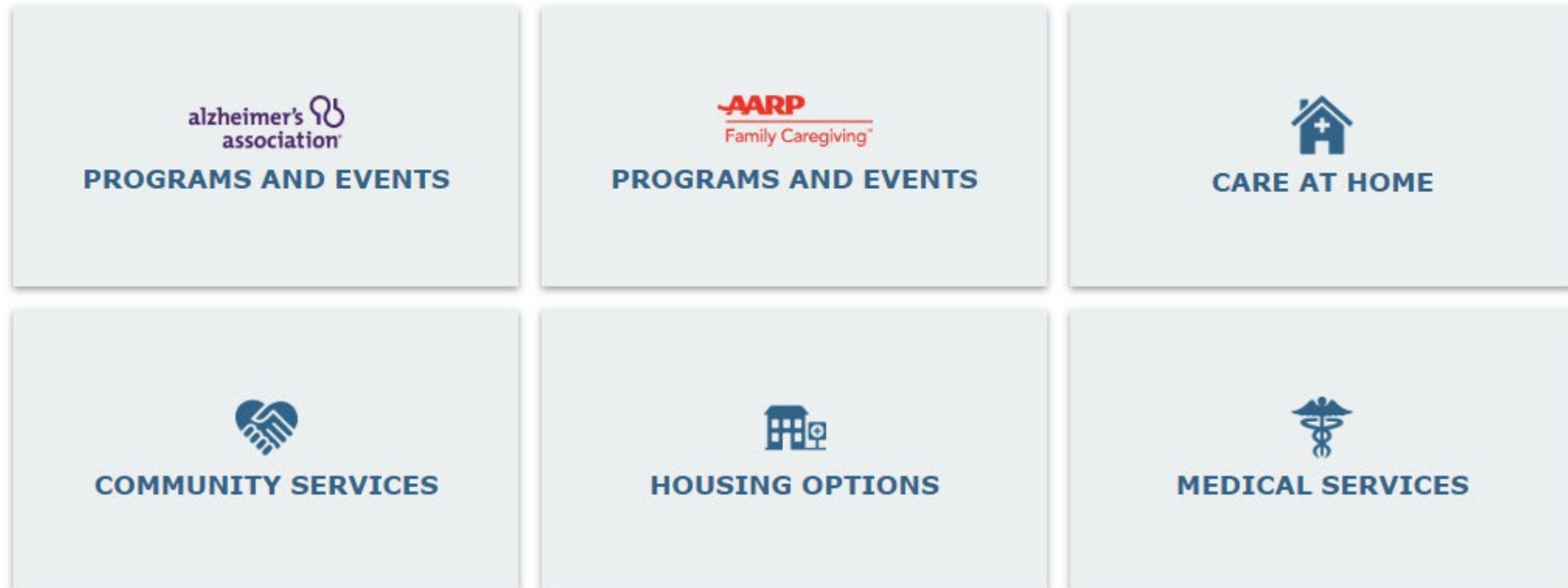
We have transitioned in-person support groups and education programs to virtual platforms during COVID-19 pandemic

# Community Resource Finder

[www.communityresourcefinder.org](http://www.communityresourcefinder.org)

Get easy access to resources, community programs and services.

Based on guidance from local governments and health departments during the COVID-19 crisis, many programs will be offered virtually rather than in-person.



# ALZConnected®

[www.alzconnected.org](http://www.alzconnected.org)

ALZConnected® is a free online community for everyone affected by Alzheimer's or another dementia, including:

- People living with the disease
- Caregivers
- Family members
- Friends
- Individuals who have lost someone to Alzheimer's or another dementia

alz connected

Email Address Password Sign In

Reset Password

"Caring for someone with Alzheimer's can make you feel alone. Now, I've found others like me."

join now

View Message Boards from others like you

Caregivers Forum

I have Alzheimers

**Moving Advice**  
My mom was recently diagnosed with mild-moderate Alzheimer's disease and was started on Aricept. We have convinced her to move into an independent living facility. As you can imagine she initially agreed and now does not want to go.

**Tell me I'm not alone**  
Hi, I just stumbled upon this discussion board tonight and thought it would be a great way to help cope with my mother's recent diagnosis of early onset Alzheimer's.

**If I hear...one more time.**  
Just this morning I saw this on Facebook "People will never truly understand something until it happens to them". After I read that, I came on the Message Board to get my strength for the day and saw this post. Just when I think I have come to the end of my rope, something or someone gives me just enough to keep going until I can right myself. Thank you everyone for your unseen, non judgmental and loving support.?

**Screening**  
I pestered the Neuro office and they at least told me that I won't be scheduled for another screening until late fall/early winter. I understand this can be good - maybe the forgetfulness, etc. was due to another cause and it could work itself out by that time.

**Early-onset Alzheimer's Disease**  
I am new to this site, however I just recently started a blog about Early-onset Alzheimer's, as my mother was diagnosed a couple years ago at age 52.

**Parent as Caregiver**  
I'm wondering if anyone knows of a situation where an elderly parent is caring for an adult child with Alzheimer's, and how their experience differs from many of us in the opposite situation.

# Alzheimer's Navigator®

[www.alzheimersnavigator.org](http://www.alzheimersnavigator.org)

Alzheimer's Navigator is a free online tool that helps guide caregivers to answers by creating a personalized action plan and linking you to information, support and local resources.

ALZHEIMER'S navigator®

alzheimer's  association®

## What do you want to know?

Choose one of these topics to develop a personalized action plan.



Working with Your  
Doctor



Symptoms



Safety



Legal Planning



Knowledge



Financial Planning



Driving



Caregiver Support



Care Options



Daily Living

# Bibliography

Information for this program was secured from materials made available by the National Alzheimer's Association.

This program was developed by the  
Alzheimer's Association Chapters of  
the Commonwealth of Virginia.

This training is the sole property of the Alzheimer's Association and may not be used in any part by anyone with the exception of Alzheimer's Association contract trainers for programs scheduled by the Alzheimer's Association.