

# Understanding Alzheimer's and Dementia

ALZHEIMER'S  ASSOCIATION®



## Impact of Alzheimer's



Test your knowledge



Approximately how many Americans are currently living with Alzheimer's?


Over 3 million

More than 6 million

About 8 million

About 11 million





**MORE THAN 6 MILLION  
AMERICANS ARE LIVING WITH  
ALZHEIMER'S**

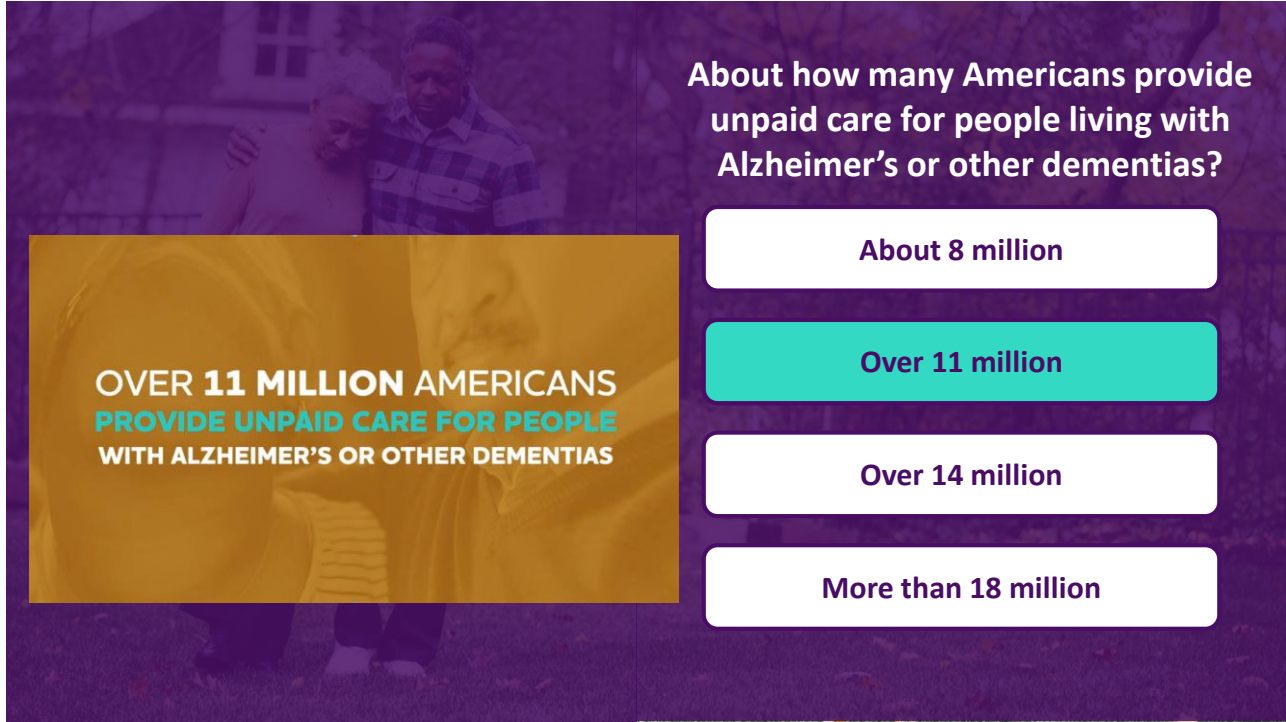
Approximately how many Americans are currently living with Alzheimer's?

- Over 3 million
- More than 6 million**
- About 8 million
- About 11 million



About how many Americans provide unpaid care for people living with Alzheimer's or other dementias?

- About 8 million
- Over 11 million
- Over 14 million
- More than 18 million**



**OVER 11 MILLION AMERICANS PROVIDE UNPAID CARE FOR PEOPLE WITH ALZHEIMER'S OR OTHER DEMENTIAS**

About how many Americans provide unpaid care for people living with Alzheimer's or other dementias?

- About 8 million
- Over 11 million**
- Over 14 million
- More than 18 million

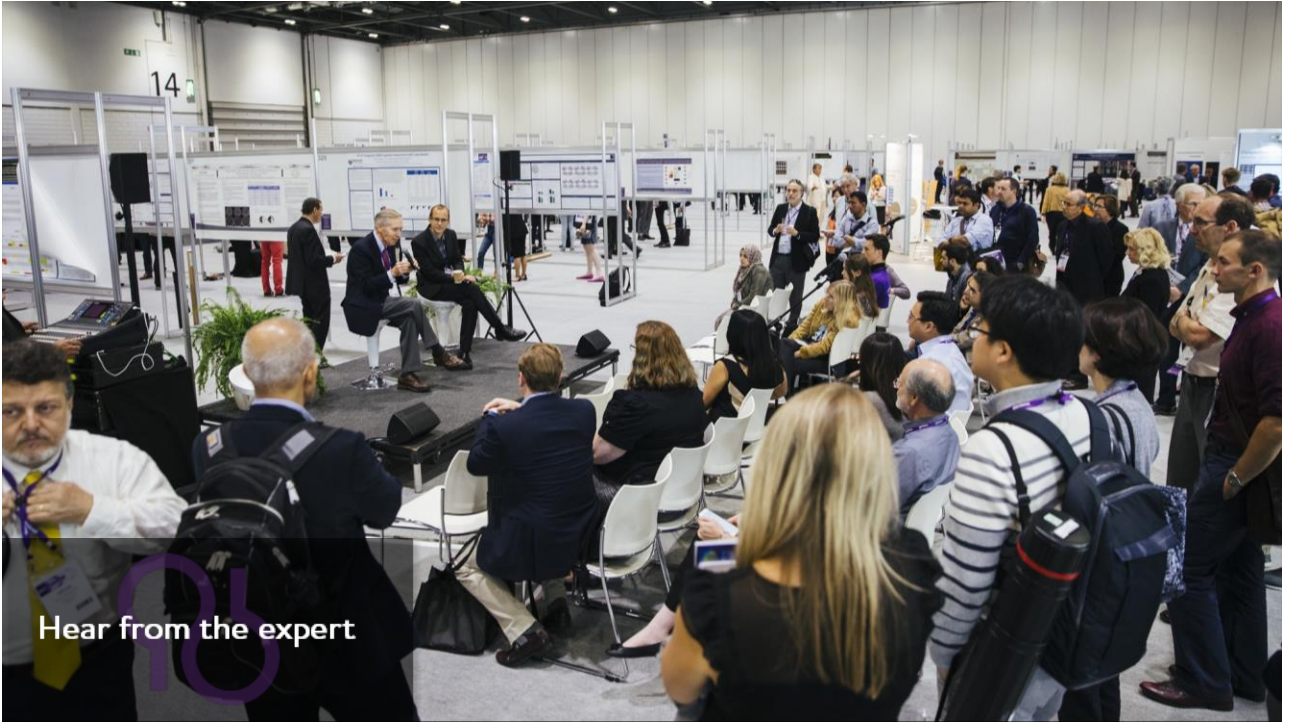
Know the facts



Know the facts







Hear from the expert

Heather Snyder, Ph.D.  
Alzheimer's Association

## Alzheimer's and Dementia Recap

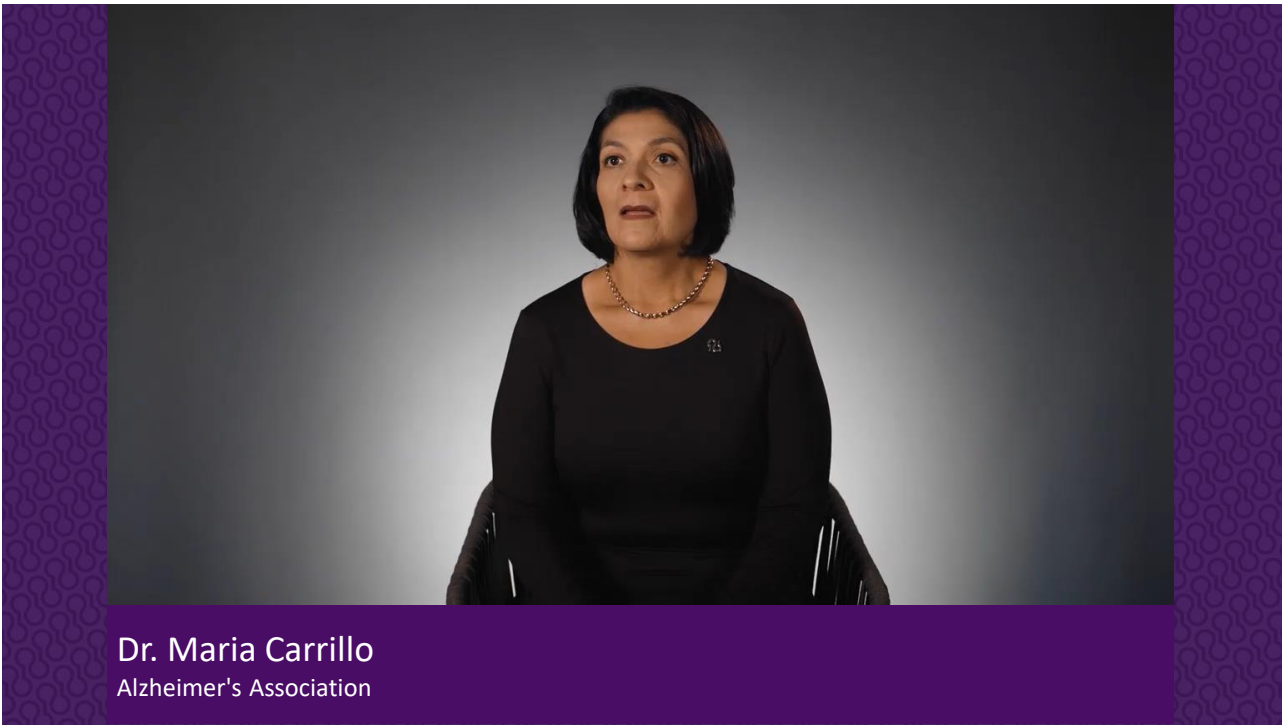
- Dementia is a general term for a collection of symptoms that are severe enough to interfere with daily life.
- Alzheimer's is the most common cause of dementia.
- Alzheimer's is not a normal part of aging; it is a progressive brain disease.



Alzheimer's in the Brain



Hear from the expert



Dr. Maria Carrillo  
Alzheimer's Association



# Know the 10 Warning Signs

|  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Memory changes that disrupt daily life                        | 6. New problems with words in speaking or writing            |
| 2. Challenges in planning or solving problems                    | 7. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps |
| 3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks                          | 8. Decreased or poor judgment                                |
| 4. Confusion with time or place                                  | 9. Withdrawal from work or social activities                 |
| 5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships | 10. Changes in mood and personality                          |

ALZHEIMER'S  ASSOCIATION

## Effective Communication Strategies



alzheimer's  association

## Learning Objectives:

- Explain the communication changes that take place throughout the course of the disease.
- Decode the verbal and behavioral messages delivered by someone living with dementia and respond in ways that are helpful to the person.
- Identify strategies to connect and communicate at each stage of the disease.

alzheimer's  association®

## What is Communication?

Connecting with others  
 Conversation  
 Self-expression  
 Body language  
 Talking  
 Sense of Self  
 Attitude  
 Interaction  
 Making Decisions  
 Relationships  
 WORDS  
 FACIAL EXPRESSIONS  
 Sending messages  
 BODY LANGUAGE  
 Tone of voice  
 Receiving messages  
 Listening

alzheimer's  association®

## Communication Changes Throughout the Disease

### Early stage (Mild)

Convey thoughts and feelings through language.  
Able to make decisions about future care.  
May misinterpret what others say.

### Middle stage (Moderate)

Use basic words and sentences.  
Rely more on tone of voice, facial expression & body language.  
Continue to need emotional connection & meaningful activity.

### Late stage (Severe)

May still respond to familiar words, phrases or songs.  
Use body language and the five senses to connect.



alzheimer's  association®



## Communication in the Early Stage

### Changes you may notice:

- Difficulty finding the right words.
- Taking longer to speak or respond.
- Withdrawing from conversations.
- Struggling with decision-making or problem-solving.

alzheimer's  association®





## Communication in the Early Stage

### To connect:

- Ask directly how to help with communication.
- Keep sentences clear and straightforward.
- Leave plenty of time for conversations.
- Include the person in conversations that affect him or her, including planning for the future.

alzheimer's  association®

## Communication in the Middle Stage

### Changes you may notice:

- Increased difficulty finding the right words.
- Using familiar words repeatedly.
- Inventing new words to describe familiar things.
- Easily losing train of thought.
- Speaking less frequently.
- Communicating through behavior rather than words more often.

**\*\*Consult a doctor when you notice major or sudden changes\*\***



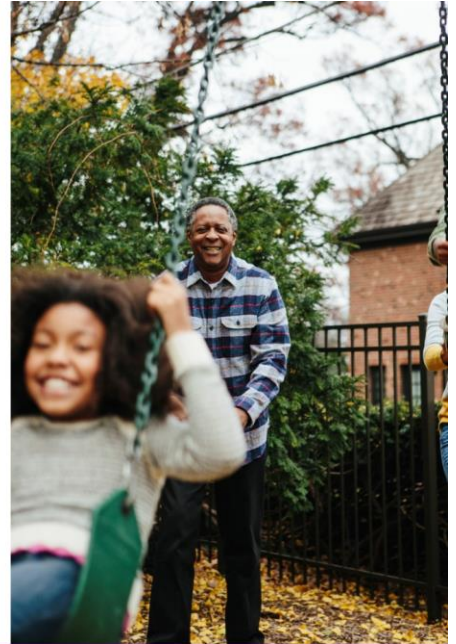
alzheimer's  association®



## Communication in the Middle Stage

### To connect, approach the person gently

- Approach from the front, say who you are and call the person by name.
- Maintain eye contact and get at eye level if seated or reclining.
- Avoid criticizing, correcting and arguing.
- Pay attention to your tone.
- Take your time.



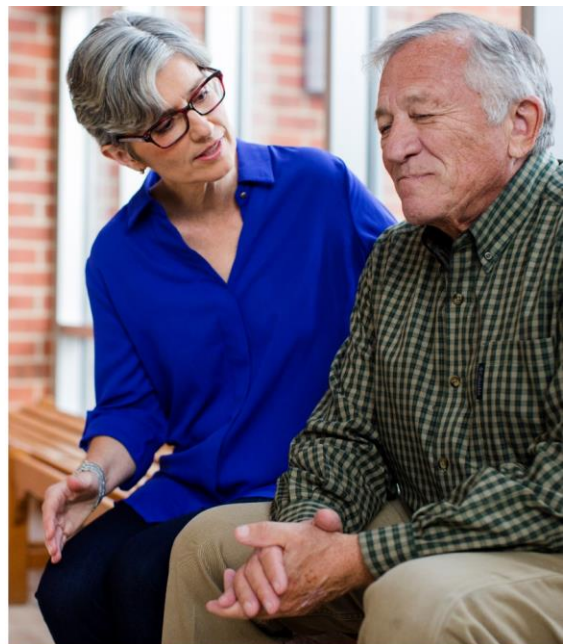
alzheimer's  association

## Communication in the Middle Stage

### To connect, join the person's reality

Keep respect and empathy in your mind, then:

- Assess the person's needs.
- Let the person know you hear his or her concerns, whether they are expressed through words, behavior or both.
- Provide a brief answer.
- Respond to the emotions behind the statement.



alzheimer's  association



## Communication in the Middle Stage

### To connect, keep it slow and basic

- Use short sentences and basic words.
- Speak slowly and clearly, one person and one question at a time.
- Limit distractions.
- Be patient.
- Offer a guess or fill in words if acceptable.

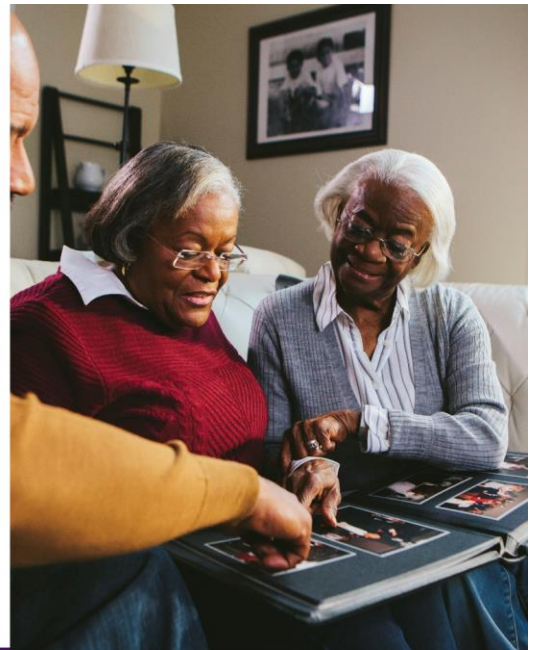


alzheimer's  association®

## Communication in the Middle Stage

### To connect, give multiple cues

- Provide visual cues and gestures.
- Avoid sudden movement.
- Write things down for the person.
- Put answers into your questions.
- Repeat as needed.
- Turn negatives into positives.
- Avoid quizzing.



alzheimer's  association®



## Communication in the Middle Stage

**To connect, respond empathically and reassure**

- Join the person's reality.
- Provide reassurance that you hear and understand.
- Focus on the feelings, not the facts.
- Validate and redirect the person if necessary.



alzheimer's  association®



## Communication in the Late Stage

**Changes you may notice:**

- Communication is reduced to a few words or sounds.
- Possible responses to familiar words or phrases.

**To connect:**

- Listen for expressions of pain and respond promptly.
- Help the person feel safe and happy.
- Continue to bring respect to each conversation.
- Keep talking.
- Use all five senses to communicate.

alzheimer's  association®

| Sight   | Sound  | Touch   | Smell  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brightly colored photos</li> <li>Famous paintings (Norman Rockwell, Van Gogh)</li> <li>Favorite settings (neighborhoods in the past, vacations)</li> <li>Scenes from the past (historic events, old cars)</li> <li>YouTube videos of topics of interest               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and cute animals</li> </ul> </li> <li>Paint with watercolors</li> <li>Go outdoors</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Familiar music from their era</li> <li>Recordings of nature, animals, cities, farms, etc</li> <li>Songs, speech, or hymns in the person's native language</li> <li>Read books, poetry, scripture, or magazine articles to the person</li> <li>Hum calming tunes while providing care</li> <li>Let them hear the gentle sound of your voice</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gently play with the person's hair</li> <li>Give lotion hand massages or basic manicures</li> <li>Feel different fabrics and textured items</li> <li>Squeeze non-toxic clay or simple manipulatives</li> <li>Hold the person's hand or stroke their arm or back</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bake!</li> <li>Herbs and spices</li> <li>Freshly cut grass, leaves, flowers</li> <li>Teas, coffee beans</li> <li>Shaving cream, pipe tobacco</li> <li>Meaningful scents (a loved one's perfume)</li> </ul> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Taste</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Favorite foods</li> <li>Home baked items</li> <li>Ice creams, puddings, spoonfuls of syrup</li> </ul> |

alzheimer's  association®

## Communication in All Stages of the Disease

- Join the person's reality to connect.
- Understand and accept what you can and cannot change.
- Remember that the person retains a sense of self despite the losses of the disease.
- Demonstrate respect and connect through feelings.
- Always treat the person as the adult he or she is.
- Try to decode the person's communications.
- Recognize the effects of your mood and actions.
- Try to understand the source of reactions.
- Help meet the needs while soothing and calming the person.



alzheimer's  association®

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  |  |
|  |  |

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| Something you do every day |  |
|                            |  |



|                                   |                                  |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <p>Something you do every day</p> | <p>Some place you like to go</p> |
|                                   |                                  |

|                                      |                                  |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <p>Something you do every day</p>    | <p>Some place you like to go</p> |
| <p>A hobby or activity you enjoy</p> |                                  |

|                               |                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Something you do every day    | Some place you like to go |
| A hobby or activity you enjoy | A role that defines you   |

|                                       |                           |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <del>Something you do every day</del> | Some place you like to go |
| A hobby or activity you enjoy         | A role that defines you   |

|                               |                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Something you do every day    | Some place you like to go |
| A hobby or activity you enjoy | A role that defines you   |

|                               |                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Something you do every day    | Some place you like to go |
| A hobby or activity you enjoy | A role that defines you   |



|                               |                           |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Something you do every day    | Some place you like to go |
| A hobby or activity you enjoy | A role that defines you   |

|  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| Something you do every day                                     | Some place you like to go |
| <b>What would matter most if these things were taken away?</b> |                           |
| A hobby or activity you enjoy                                  | A role that defines you   |

|  |                                  |
|--|----------------------------------|
| <p>Something you do every day</p>                              | <p>Some place you like to go</p> |
| <p>What would matter most if these things were taken away?</p> |                                  |
| <p><b>What would you want from your loved ones?</b></p>        |                                  |
| <p>A hobby or activity you enjoy</p>                           | <p>A role that defines you</p>   |



**Alzheimer's Association**

## Help is ALWAYS Available

### ALL OF OUR SERVICES ARE FREE:

- Educational programs
- Advocacy
- Information and Referrals
- Care Consultations: Free Care Planning
- Support groups
- Safety services
- Respite funding
- Lending Library



24/7 Helpline  
**800.272.3900**

alzheimer's  association®

 Live Chat

## Education Programs

- Free online e-learnings available at [www.alz.org/education](http://www.alz.org/education)
  - 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!



Multiple delivery  
options are available.



Whether you can spare a few hours a week or make a more significant time commitment, consider volunteering with the Alzheimer's Association. Numerous opportunities are available, including becoming a community educator or joining your local Walk Committee. [alz.org/volunteer](https://www.alz.org/volunteer)

- Volunteer
- Advocacy
- TrialMatch®
- Walk to End Alzheimer's®
- The Longest Day®





Volunteer

Advocacy

TrialMatch®

Walk to End Alzheimer's®

The Longest Day®

Held annually in more than 600 communities, the Alzheimer's Association Walk to End Alzheimer's is the world's largest fundraiser to fight the disease. Register today to raise awareness and funds to benefit Alzheimer's care, support and research. [alz.org/walk](https://alz.org/walk)

**WALK TO  
END  
ALZHEIMER'S**

alzheimer's  association®



**ALZHEIMER'S  ASSOCIATION®**

---

**800.272.3900 | [alz.org](https://alz.org)®**

**Questions?**