

FOCUS

Helping teens understand Alzheimer Disease



If you know someone with Alzheimer Disease, the information on this fact sheet may help you understand the illness.

Some Facts

Right now, no one knows what causes

Alzheimer Disease and there is no cure. There are drugs that can help with some of the symptoms of the disease so people are less anxious and can maintain their independence for a longer period of time. But, eventually individuals will lose many of their abilities and will need to rely upon others to take care of them.



Alzheimer Disease kills brain cells

causing them to shrink or die. When

people have this disease, they forget how to do familiar things, they don't recognize the people they love, they have difficulty understanding a conversation or they may act in an unusual manner, for example, pacing around a

room. These changes occur over many years and get worse over time. These actions are not their fault. Alzheimer Disease makes people act in this way.

Alzheimer *Society*

Can you imagine?

It is probably difficult to imagine what it would be like to lose part of yourself. Some of the situations in Teen's Reality may apply to you. Some of the situations in Alzheimer Reality apply to people with Alzheimer Disease. Match them up to try to imagine what effect Alzheimer Disease may have on someone.

Teen's Reality

- ✓ Getting a driver's licence
- ✓ Leaving home for your own apartment
 - ✓ Finding that special someone in your life
- ✓ Doing your homework or studying at university
 - ✓ Trying the latest fashion trend
- ✓ Doing your laundry and making your own meals
 - ✓ Being among friends who understand what you are going through

Alzheimer Reality

- ✗ Not recognizing your husband or wife of 50 years
- ✗ Not understanding what you read in the newspaper
 - ✗ Having your driver's licence taken away because you confuse the gas pedal with the brake
- ✗ Forgetting where you live and getting lost in your neighbourhood
 - ✗ Forgetting how to work the washing machine and stove; putting your clothes on inside out
- ✗ Forgetting how to tie your shoes
 - ✗ Feeling alone among strangers and not knowing what to do

Additional Resources

Visit the Alzheimer Society of Canada Web site at www.alzheimer.ca or contact your local Alzheimer Society



Video

Just for the Summer

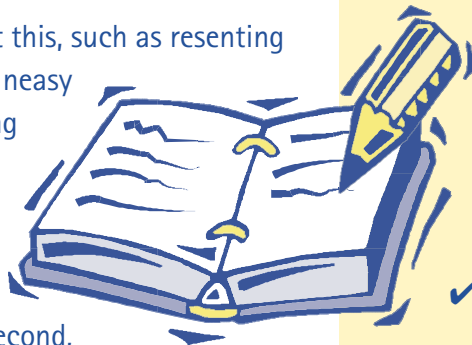
Churchill Films, Los Angeles, CA
213-207-6600 29 mins.

Philip, a high school track star, must come to terms with Alzheimer Disease when his grandmother comes to live with him and his parents "just for the summer"—until she's better. But for Gram, who has Alzheimer Disease, the summer will never end and she will only get worse. Philip frequently misses track practice to care for her, but he's too embarrassed to talk about it to his friends, who begin to shun him. Only in remembering Gram as she used to be can Philip's anger, shame and helplessness subside, and understanding emerge.

Is Alzheimer Disease affecting your life?

If your mom or dad is caring for a grandparent, you have probably noticed some changes. They may be very busy with work, home and caring for your grandparent. You may notice that your parents are tired, impatient or don't have enough time for you. They may ask you to help out.

You may have many feelings about this, such as resenting the demands on your time, being uneasy about having friends over, or feeling helpless because you don't know what to do. First of all, if this is happening to you, talk to your parents, teacher or an adult you trust about how you are feeling. Second, contact the Alzheimer Society to get help and to learn more about the disease. One example of coping with your feelings is to keep a journal.



Even though your grandparent may not be able to do many things, some of his/her abilities and interests will remain. You may be surprised how much you can help.

Here are a few examples. Let's say, your grandfather has Alzheimer Disease. If your grandfather liked to listen to music, you can share your favourite artist's CD. If he liked to garden, he may enjoy helping you with yard work. Perhaps your grandfather played sports. He probably

Make a personal biography: Become a Journalist.

Your grandparent will remember things from his/her past; why not interview your grandmother or grandfather on what it was like to be a teen? Tape the interview and write up a personal biography to share with other family members.

- ✓ Who was your best friend?
- ✓ What did you do after school?
- ✓ Did you have a part time job?
- ✓ What chores did you do around the house?
- ✓ What kind of clothes did you wear?

would enjoy your company on a regular walking program after school. Or, maybe the two of you could wash the car.

Caring for someone with Alzheimer Disease is not easy. Some days will be frustrating and other days will be better. Do the best you can. Remember, when you spend time with the individual in a meaningful way, he or she will always feel your love.

Alzheimer Society

For more information:

or check the phone book for your local Alzheimer Society.

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