

Helping a dementia patient with activities of daily living: an example

A presentation from

Dementia Care Notes

<http://dementiacarenotes.in>

Our "normal" behaviour can be confusing and overwhelming for a dementia patient.

This slideshow presents an example of how family members change their way of helping Amma after they start understanding Amma's problem.



Ramesh (son-in-law)



Shubha (daughter)



Amma

Before the diagnosis



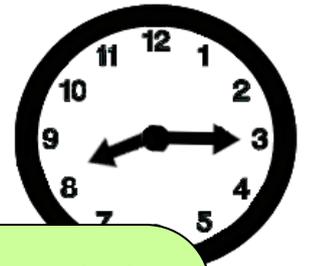
At 8:00 a.m., Shubha notices that Amma has not eaten her breakfast. She rushes to Amma's room. Amma is sitting on her bed and looking out of the window.

Amma, you haven't had your bath! Come on now, get up and have your bath. Breakfast will get cold. Rukmini has to clean the vessels after that. Ramesh and I have to leave by 8:30. It is already 8:00. Hurry up!!

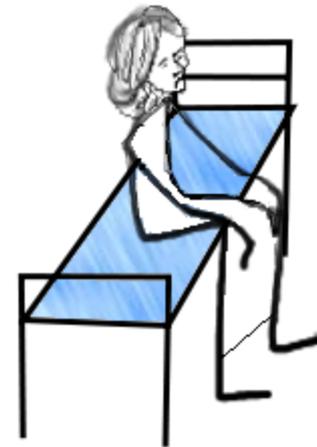


Before the diagnosis

But fifteen minutes later, Amma is still sitting on her bed. Shubha gets worried.



Amma, what's wrong with you!! I can't be late today! I've got to make a very important presentation. Customers are coming from Japan! Come on, get up now. Are you not well?? Hurry up with your bath and come for your breakfast. Get up, no? Please? *PLEASE?* Should I bring you your breakfast plate here?



Before the diagnosis



Amma doesn't get up. Shubha holds her shoulder to make Amma pay attention.

Amma turns around. She looks angrily at Shubha, as if Shubha is a stranger.



Before the diagnosis

Finally, Shubha drags Amma for her bath. Amma refuses to eat her breakfast. Shubha and Ramesh are able to leave for office only at 9:00 am.



Thank God that Rukmini agreed to give Amma breakfast later. But I don't know if Amma will she listen to a maid...

Yesterday, Amma looked at me as if she didn't know me! She asked me who I was.



Before the diagnosis

Why is Amma behaving like this?

Why is she so angry with us?



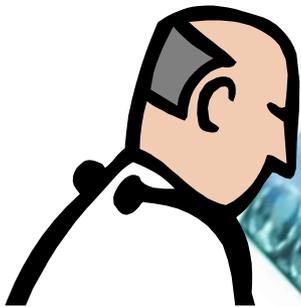
The diagnosis

Shubha and Ramesh are worried. They take Amma to a doctor. The doctor conducts tests and talks to Amma. Later, he explains problem to Shubha and Ramesh.

Your mother has dementia, probably of the Alzheimer's type. Her condition will get worse over the years. There is no cure, but medicines may reduce symptoms.

What can we do to help her?

You must understand her difficulties. Change how you interact with her. Here are some references for you...



The diagnosis

After meeting the doctor, Shubha and Ramesh discuss how dementia may be affecting Amma.

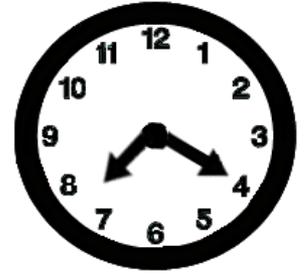
I used to keep explaining things in such detail to Amma. I was always telling her to hurry. Maybe that confused her more.

We will have to change the way we talk to her. We must remember her problems when we help her.

And I felt bad because she did not know who I was! I didn't know she had dementia.



After the diagnosis

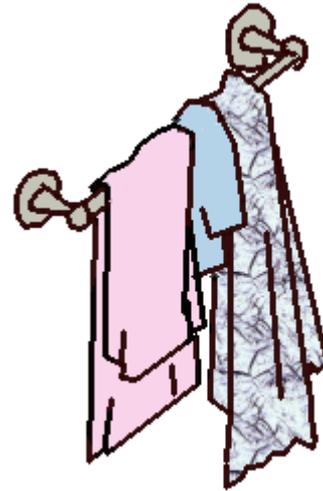


Shubha now knows that Amma finds it difficult to understand things. Amma cannot “plan” a bath. Also, Amma is slower and needs more time for everything.

So first, Shubha gets everything ready



A bucket with water of
at the right temperature



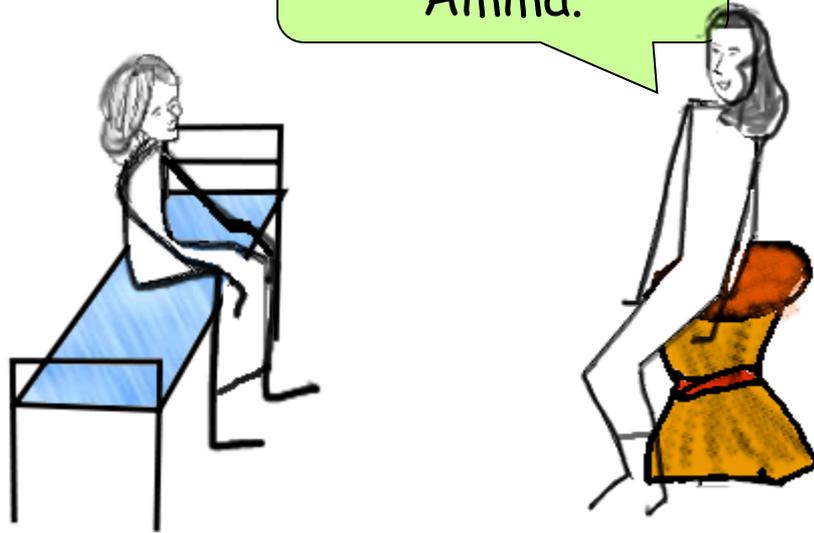
Fresh clothes
and towels

After the diagnosis

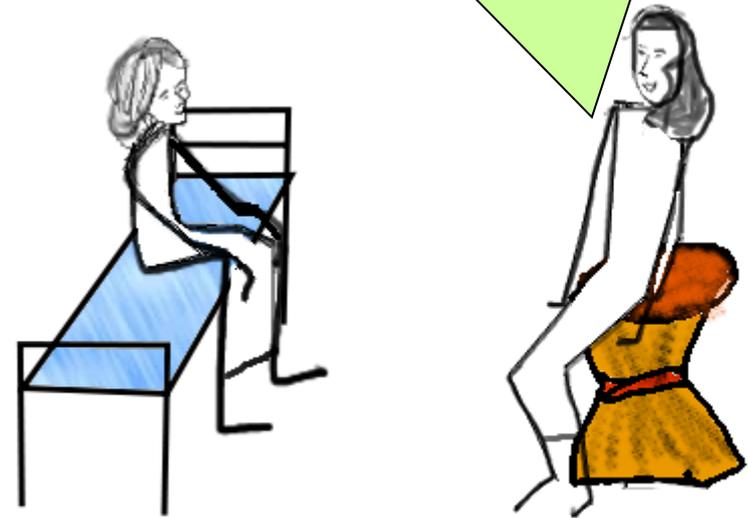
She greets Amma in a simple and affectionate way.



Good morning, Amma.



Come for your bath.



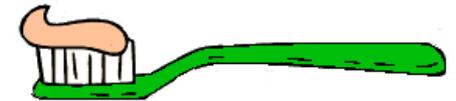
Shubha always faces Amma while talking to her. She talks calmly. She uses short and simple sentences. She asks Amma to do only one task at a time, and does not ask unnecessary questions.

Shubha does not give long explanations any more. She knows they confuse Amma.

After the diagnosis

Shubha walks with Amma to the bathroom and helps her if needed.

For example, on some days Amma is able to brush her teeth without any help.



But on other days, Amma looks blankly at the toothbrush. Then Shubha points to the toothpaste tube. If Amma still looks confused, Shubha squeezes the paste on to the brush.

While helping, Shubha speaks in small, simple sentences.

After the diagnosis

Shubha also helps Amma with her bath.

Right now, Amma can bathe herself, but needs help to shampoo her hair.

Amma, close your eyes!



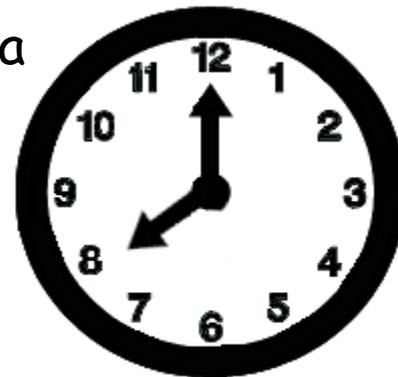
Amma sometimes wants to wear a saree but cannot do it herself.

So Shubha pleats her saree and tucks it in Amma's petticoat.

Shubha always lets Amma do as much as she can. She helps Amma whenever Amma looks confused or upset.

After the diagnosis

After Amma finishes her bath, Shubha leads Amma to the dining room.



Amma, let us have breakfast. Today I have made aloo parantha.

Amma smiles at the smell.



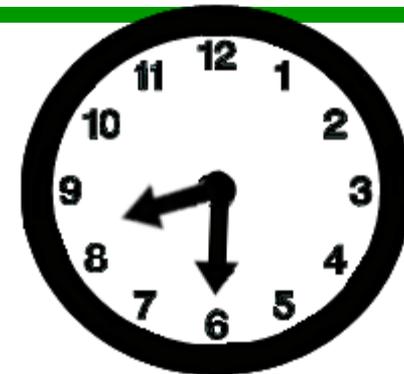
On some days, Amma eats by herself.

On other days, Shubha has to help Amma eat.

Amma needs less help on some days, and more help on other days. But on an average, the amount of help that Amma needs is increasing.

After the diagnosis

Shubha and Ramesh are able to leave for work on time on most days now. Amma also looks more peaceful.



I'm so glad we now understand Amma's problems. I just made a few changes in my way of talking to her, and now she looks much happier

She smiles more often now. Yesterday, she was singing an old Hindi film song. She sings so well.



After the diagnosis

Shubha and Ramesh know that Amma's condition cannot be cured. Amma's problems will get worse. She will need more care.

I will talk to my boss today. I want to start working from home instead.

I think I should leave my job and work as an independent consultant. Then I can be home with Amma more often.



Many people think they cannot do anything for a dementia patient because there is no cure.

But if we learn how to talk to patients and how to help them, the patient is happier, and so is the family.



Presentation from Dementia Care Notes

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