



The Relationship Between Dementia And Depression

As more and more research is being done on Alzheimer's Disease and other dementias, a number of studies are suggesting that there is a correlation between depression and dementia.

In fact, according to one source, "It now appears that individuals with long histories of clinical depression (particularly depression that goes untreated) have a greater risk for developing dementia." <https://www.helpforalzheimersfamilies.com/learn/the-basics/alzheimers-faqs/depression-and-dementia/>

The same source also makes an important point. "...a risk factor is something that is likely to increase the chances that a particular event will occur. Having a risk factor for Alzheimer's disease doesn't mean that you will ever get Alzheimer's disease; many people with histories of depression never get dementia." I will go out on a limb here and also suggest that there are probably people who've never had histories of depression who do get Alzheimer's and dementia. My reason for bringing up this correlation is to create greater awareness. If we have a loved one who appears to be chronically depressed as they are aging, we can do things to help alleviate the depression. Depression tends to make people isolate, become lethargic and hopeless. When relatives, friends and caregivers are aware of these behaviors in a loved one, there are actions that can be taken.

More importantly, if a loved one has already been diagnosed with dementia, they may not be able to tell you they are depressed. They may just stop doing things they used to love doing.

While it may not always work, family members, friends and caregivers who are aware of the relationship can initiate activities that might spark more joy and interest. My mother has vascular dementia, and I am fully aware that many of the things family members attempt to do to engage loved ones living with dementia can end up being frustrating to both parties. But I am convinced the effort is worth it.

I leave you with this tidbit from a wonderful website full of information for families who have a loved one with Alzheimer's, "Even if we don't fully understand the mechanisms at work within the brain, there is no doubt that a long period of depression may lead to isolation, inactivity and hopelessness. David Troxel, noted dementia care expert says that, "the brain loves company." When you can overcome depression, it is clearly good for the brain." <https://www.helpforalzheimersfamilies.com/learn/the-basics/alzheimers-faqs/depression-and-dementia/>

As we come to the end of September and another World Alzheimer's Month, I think of the millions of families navigating life with their loved ones who have this disease. My heart goes out to everyone who is facing the confusion, the loss and the frustrations. And for those who are still mentally alert, I encourage you to take time to make sure your legal affairs are the way you want them to be. That may mean reviewing your estate and asset protection plans, your will, your powers of attorney for health care directives. These are things that will make life just a bit easier in the event any dementia's are ever diagnosed.

<https://www.brightfocus.org/alzheimers/article/depression-and-alzheimers-disease>

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