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How to Parent Your Parent Who Has Alzheimer's

Parenting Role

People who live with Alzheimer's disease or a related dementia will gradually lose the ability to manage their own affairs and carry out routine activities of daily living. When this happens you will need to step in and help out. In effect, you become the parent.

The role of parenting will probably feel strange and awkward, especially in the beginning. And it can become quite difficult – for both of you - if you and your parent don't get along well.

However, you need to accept the situation. In most cases both you and your parent will eventually accept the new relationship.

The amount of parenting needed depends in part on the person's living arrangement. A parent living with you or with a spouse who can help them or a parent living in an assisted living or long-term care facility where a considerable amount of help is provided will need less assistance than a parent living alone.

But regardless of where your mother or father lives, you will still probably have to function as a parent in many ways, and your specific duties will expand and increase considerably as the illness progresses.

In order to fulfill these duties it will be most helpful if you have power of attorney for finances and power of attorney for healthcare. Ideally your parent will have executed these documents before developing Alzheimer's. If they did not, then you should get these documents as soon as possible while your parent is still competent enough to have them prepared.

You will need to have power of attorney to manage or help manage their finances, legal affairs, or make their healthcare decisions on their behalf. You will also need it

to arrange for placement in a facility. Finally, you'll need it if you ever have to engage hospice care services.

10 Important Responsibilities

There are numerous tasks and responsibilities you will have to assume or at least help out with. The 10 most important ones are:

- Do laundry for them
- Clean their home
- Do their grocery shopping and other errands
- Prepare their meals
- Purchase their medicine and remind them to take it
- Get them to stop driving when or if appropriate
- Arrange for entertainment and engage them in meaningful activities
- Provide social stimulation by having them spend time with friends, relatives and/or neighbors
- Handle their financial and legal affairs
- Make health care decisions on their behalf

Some of these duties will be more difficult than others to carry out. Typically, getting someone to stop driving and/or arranging for placement in a facility if they don't want to move are the most stressful and challenging to achieve.

In these cases you will need to provide "tough love" – much as they may have shown you when you were an adolescent. You will have to be guided by your determination of what is best for them and then go forward with no hesitation, regardless of their desires and oft-stated objections. This will not be easy, but it has to be done. You will have to assume the role of parent and be firm in order to prevail for their benefit.

Marie Marley is the award-winning author of [Come Back Early Today: A Memoir of Love, Alzheimer's and Joy](#).

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