Caring for Seniors with Autism | Senior Care - Parent Giving

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When we hear about autism spectrum disorder (ASD), we often think about small children and the challenges they will need to face throughout their lives, but most often than not we forget that these children will grow up and turn into young adults and then seniors.

Although autism can't be cured, there are many approaches that you, as a caregiver –whether you are a beloved family member or a paid professional - can make to facilitate the life of an elderly that has been diagnosed with ASD.

Autism Spectrum Disorder can be diagnosed at any stage in life, however, when it is rather later than earlier, it can be a little more challenging - but not impossible - to adjust. If diagnosed at a later stage in life, usually, a series of changes in the daily routine and care needs to be made.

If the diagnosis was made in the early years, this is something that you will be more accustomed to and dealing with a senior with Autism could be a little less changeling for the family.

We must all agree that one of the most important aspects of our existence is having a good **quality of life**, and so, with that in mind, here are some great tips on how to take care of seniors with ASD.

Keeping a daily routine

In general, individuals with ASD need a healthy daily routine. These simple everyday tasks will be extremely powerful as they will reinforce a feeling of happiness, stability and overall well-being. When these feelings are surfaced and experienced, it will be much easier for them to accept and handle other changes when needed.

A great proactive plan is to sit down and make a morning schedule or a to-do list with the ASD senior. The routine must be straightforward and easy to follow. Some examples can include healthy meal times, short walks - if possible, an art class, medication at a specific time of the day, attending a support group, quality family time.

Also, keep in mind that a hygiene routine should be included. Reminding the senior with ASD of the good points of their appearance can be a good way of encouraging healthy hygiene habits.

A safe environment for everyone

It is imperative to ensure that the environment is prepared according to the difficulties of each individual.

For example, if the elderly person has difficulty moving around, it is essential to avoid slippery rugs, floors and cluttered spaces. Another idea is to install **wall bars** around so they can walk freely when needed.

Sociability is a must

To improve the individual's quality of life diagnosed with Autism, a key element is social interaction.

Whenever possible, seniors should attend a support group. Support groups can be a great place for them to identify with other people that face the same everyday challenges.

Always go slow and see how they feel - they don't like being pushed too hard into doing something they are not 100% comfortable with and sure about. A good idea is to start nice and easy, with an easy topic and then add someone else into the conversation.

Since social interaction can be harder for seniors with ASD, support groups could be added to the routine.

Family support can be life-changing

To ensure good self-esteem and results in individuals with autism in older stages in life, it is important to have a good, caring and healthy family environment.

Although it is not always easy to deal with elderly and autistic patients, the family is one of the most important roles in this process.

Be kind to their sensitivities

People with autism are far more sensitive as their senses are sharper than normal. Music and general noises will sound louder in their ears, lights can appear much brighter for them and smells can feel stronger.

With this in mind, try to find out which one of these senses can be a trigger and work towards minimizing it. A lower TV and radio can be more accommodating while dimming the light or using side lamps can do the trick for avoiding distractions and stress.

Watch out for the non-spoken language

Autism affects the way people communicate, especially seniors, so you will need to be extra sensitive when it comes to understanding what they need and figure out what is going on with them.

Simple questions such as “How are you feeling?” should be avoided and replaced with more specific questions such as “Are you happy/sad today?” “Are you feeling leg cramps or stiff joints?” Specific questions are more prompted to result in clear replies.

Some ASD seniors may panic one day when they realize that they have lost their hearing or can no longer see, so all eyes should be on them to understand the unspoken words of what is happening.

Reference: https://www.parentgiving.com/elder-care/caring-for-seniors-with-autism/