

Care Partner Journal Helps You Manage Care, Feel More in Control

When Donna Dean began keeping a journal about her beloved John's dementia symptoms, she found it helped significantly. "I was able to tell the doctor how long it had been since the first signs showed and how things had progressed," she said. Indeed, experts say maintaining a written record of daily activities and experiences can provide many benefits for those living with the disease and their families. To help people get started, Brookdale is offering a free downloadable "Care Partners Journal."

"We purposely use the phrase 'care partner' rather than 'caregiver' to convey that the dementia journey is one that you share with your loved one," said Juliet Holt Klinger, senior director of dementia care for Brookdale. "The experience involves mutual goals and participation. Caregivers can become drained from feeling they are constantly giving without receiving and the journal is a great way to help relieve some of that tension and create balance. Care partners who do best are the ones who can be open to receiving benefits throughout the process, such as a new perspective on their expectation for their relationship and delight in the daily moments of success."

With dementia's complex nature, reviewing day-to-day symptoms and behavioral expressions is important in understanding where an individual is in the disease progression and how best to respond. "Writing these details down is an excellent way to keep track of them," Holt Klinger said. "It enables you to give specific information during visits to the physician, or specialist, offering a solid foundation for treatment plans and recommendations."

Brookdale's Care Partners Journal includes areas for noting observations by date, along with prompts about what to record. These include changes in behavioral expressions and abilities; challenges; the approaches that were used; and how those involved responded to the approaches. The journal also provides a care schedule designed to be utilized when more than one care partner is involved. It helps in coordinating daily activities such as personal hygiene, medication administration, dining and more.

"We also have a section that encourages care partners to celebrate success, even if it is a seemingly small moment," Holt Klinger said. "It's crucial to highlight positive experiences, reminding everyone of the continued beauty and joy of life."

One of the most important roles of the journal, Holt Klinger added, is that it can help people feel more in control of what can seem a chaotic experience.

"Dementia's unpredictable nature can make you feel powerless," she said. "Keeping this daily record can help you better manage the situation and reminds you that you are doing your best every day on behalf of the person you love."