



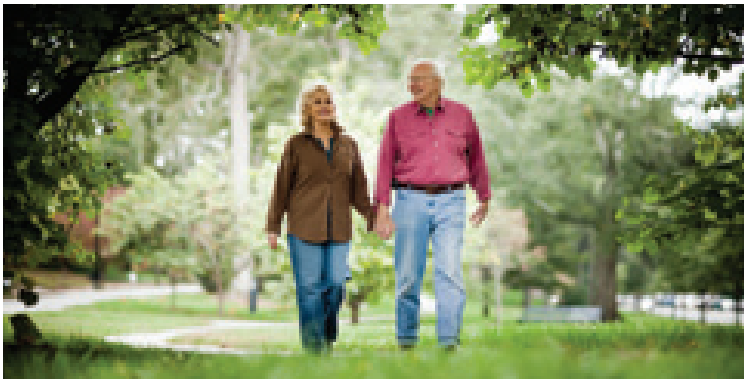
Occupational therapy
helping people to
live with dementia

Occupational therapy – helping people to live with dementia

Dementia is a progressive condition, which may not be detected in the early stages. Some of the symptoms of dementia may wrongly be put down to old age. These could include:

- Forgetfulness
- Confusion about time and place
- Difficulty in doing everyday tasks
- Changes in judgement
- Withdrawal from taking part in everyday activities
- Difficulty in solving things that were not previously a problem

If you notice any of these problems in yourself or someone close to you, it will be very worrying, so you should talk to your GP about it. Many people find it difficult to speak out or even to acknowledge the changes that are taking place. Covering up for the person or disguising the changes is instinctive, and has kind intentions, but to be really helpful, you have to get the help that is needed to live well with dementia.



Occupational therapy supporting people living with dementia

Occupational therapists are health and social care professionals who enable people to live life their way – helping people to keep up their every day activities and remain independent for as long as possible after they develop dementia.

How an occupational therapist can help people

Your situation

I feel as if I am losing my mother...she is not the person she used to be. All our old social activities don't interest her, and she just gets angry with me.

Dad is terrified of becoming dependent and not being able to look after himself. He's getting depressed and agitated.

I sometimes put the cooker on and then forget it. I'm worried that I'll cause a fire. Last month I fell over and they wanted to put me away in hospital.

I am so glad I met the occupational therapist. She was able to tell me about the continence adviser, the Alzheimer's support group, the drop in centre and the free swimming days for ladies at the local pool. I was avoiding telling the GP about the pains I get at night, and she encouraged me to go, and get help.

I am doing more and more for my wife. I have to cook and do all the cleaning, but the hardest thing to cope with is missing her companionship.



e living with dementia

How an occupational therapist can help

Communicating and sharing memories

An occupational therapist can show you how to use reminiscence and life story work to share with your mother, bringing back smiles and even tears, but allowing her to tell you things from the past that you did not know – making her feel more confident, at peace and secure in herself.

Adapting your home environment to make life easier

An occupational therapist understands how exercise can help relieve anxiety and depression in dementia and can recommend suitable exercise. They can also advise on what you can do to help the person remain independent, by making some changes around the home and advising on adaptation and equipment that can be purchased or loaned from health and social services.

Improving safety in the home

An occupational therapist knows about safety devices and alarms that are low cost or free and readily available. All occupational therapists are trained and have experience that help people avoid falling over and getting injured and can offer practical advice that will help you remain safe in your own home.

Accessing services

An occupational therapist works as part of a larger health and social care team and has the knowledge and experience to direct people to other services and provide advice about what is needed. You can talk to the occupational therapist about any aspect of your health and wellbeing and the occupational therapists will be able to inform you about other organisations and networks that can help you.

Advising carers

An occupational therapist can advise carers how to support someone living with dementia. For example, encouraging you and your loved one to continue doing household activities together. This will help to maintain skills, routine and roles.

The Dementia Services Development Centre, 2010



www.COT.org.uk

What is an occupational therapist?

Occupational therapists are health and social care professionals who help people of all ages – babies, children, adults and older people to carry out activities they need or want to do, but as a result of physical or mental illness, disability or being socially excluded, they are prevented from doing the activities they value. These could include the everyday necessities of daily living such as preparing a meal, or getting dressed, going to school or work, or simply continuing with a favourite hobby. Occupational therapists will work with individuals to find alternative ways to do those activities to help people live life their way.

An occupational therapist can:

- Provide help and training in undertaking daily activities such as bathing, dressing, eating, playing and participating in a favourite hobby
- Help people with work-related stress to re-prioritise and improve their work-life balance
- Assess and recommend equipment such as mobility aids, wheelchairs and artificial limbs and, if needed, advise on special devices to help around the home, school or workplace
- Support people to remain in or return to work

How to contact an occupational therapist

Ask your GP, nurse, social worker or other health or social care professional, or your local Alzheimer support organisation.



To find an occupational therapist in your area, please visit

www.COT.org.uk

or phone 020 7357 6480

College of Occupational Therapists Limited

The professional body for occupational therapy staff

(A subsidiary of the British Association of Occupational Therapists Limited)

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Occupational therapy and **Dementia**

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Occupational Therapy
Helping people to live life their way*



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