

## Your Loved One with Alzheimer's Lost Their Spouse and Caretaker: Now What?



For a good number of those with Alzheimer's, their primary caregiver is also their spouse or partner. So when that spouse or partner dies, it can be a double whammy. Not only does your loved one lose their caregiver, but they also have to deal with the grief of losing the person they love the most. Here's how to help them [tackle their grief](#) and set them up for care during this emotional transition.

### **Though it's hard, you must tell them**

If you think you're going to be able to fib your way around the fact that your loved one's spouse has passed, you're fooling yourself. Sure, you may have good intentions - you don't want to hurt them. But everyone has the right to know that their loved one has died - even if they may have trouble understanding it or even remembering it at future times. You may have to deal with telling them over and over again. [AgingCare.com](#) recommends reminding them for at least the first few weeks, but after that it becomes discretionary. It depends on their actual mental state whether or not it's ethical to keep forcing them to relive the trauma. Only you can make that determination about someone you love.

### **Tips to help them grieve**

The grieving process is murky for everyone, but especially for those with Alzheimer's. You may not know if they are truly grieving, and their responses to the death of their spouse may seem

odd or delayed at times. The important thing is to be patient and accept that they may not process the information the same way you do.

The [UK Alzheimer's Society says](#) that reminiscing and letting them interact with physical objects that relate to their loved one can help - even if it may seem counterintuitive to you. You should also focus on creative outlets to divert their depression and anxiety - knitting, painting, music, etc. These good outlets can replace bad outlets, as "stress-reducing" activities like drinking, smoking, or leaning on prescription drugs can be [even more detrimental](#) to a person suffering from cognitive decline and bereavement simultaneously.

### **Make the tough decision on their future care**

It's highly unlikely that a person suffering from Alzheimer's will be able to take care of themselves following the death of their spouse/caretaker, as it's an illness that progresses in unexpected ways. You will have to make a tough decision. They have to have some sort of care - whatever kind of care is best for them at this particular moment. Your three basic options are to do the caretaking yourself, hire an in-home caretaker, or look for assisted living communities.

Think about your own life. Be realistic. Can you handle the job of primary caretaker for your loved one with Alzheimer's? It's ok if you cannot. This doesn't make you a bad person. So, is it time for assisted living?

If your loved one is struggling with their own health care (taking meds incorrectly, personal hygiene, etc), it may be time. If their Alzheimer's is "shrinking their world" as [Caring.com says](#) - making them more and more isolated - it may be time. If they cannot manage their day-to-day responsibilities and are struggling to keep their home clean, neat, and organized (even with the help of a caretaker or housekeeper), it may also be time.

Everyone deals with loss differently and every Alzheimer's patient has varying levels of cognitive ability. This makes it incredibly difficult for them to process their grief - if they even understand it at all. As their trusted loved one, you must be patient with them and honest - even if it seems futile. You should give them room to grieve but also steer them toward healthy outlets. And in the end, you must be the one who makes the final determination on their future living situation.

Photo Credit: [Pixabay.com](#)