

Tips for Assisting Holocaust Survivors

1. Whenever possible, support the survivor's desire to be independent (focus on his/her strengths and abilities as well as needs).
2. Pay extra attention to how care is given. Allow the survivor to lead the way. Ask permission before performing care or beginning a service or task.
3. Consider how frightening it can be to need help and have a stranger come into your home, space or room.
4. Ask for help from supervisory staff when you encounter "difficult" behaviors.
5. Talk about war-time experiences only if the survivor brings them up. Being heard and acknowledged is important for many survivors. Sharing memories and stories may be a vital way to connect.
6. Make efforts to explore memories, people and events in the survivor's life that generate positive feelings.
7. Provide a calm environment. Avoid bringing chaotic situations into the survivor's home.
8. If the survivor is resistant to certain types of care or questions, try to revise your care plan.

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- 9.** Allow survivors to talk about their past and present; be an active listener.
- 10.** You may hear upsetting stories. It is okay to be upset yourself but it is not okay if your emotions further upset the survivor. Instead of saying “I feel terrible,” you might say “that must have been terrible for you.”
- 11.** Learn about World War II experiences that can help you better understand certain behaviors in aging Holocaust survivors.
- 12.** Be aware that illness and placement in long-term care facilities can re-awaken feelings of helplessness/powerlessness.
- 13.** Build consistency and routines but be flexible wherever possible.
- 14.** Providing education and explanations can benefit both survivors and their family members.
- 15.** Be aware of issues with food such as hoarding or hiding. Allow independence in making choices about the timing and selection of meals.