

Learn More, Do Better

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With so many people caring for loved ones at home or partnering with staff to meet the needs of those living with dementia, self-care for the care partner has become a hot topic. There are hundreds of opinions and resources available for folks to learn more about how to care for themselves while also caring for a loved one. This month, we are going to take a different approach, **self-education**.

Learning new things becomes much harder as we get older. The cool thing is no matter how old you are, if you don't have fairly significant dementia, you can grow new synaptic connections. The more excited and interested you are, and the **more you rehearse** something, the quicker the connection will form. If you let it go too quickly it will be gone.

It doesn't matter what you learn if you don't do something different. The reason Teepa and the PAC team are dedicated to teaching is because we know that people living with dementia are doing the best they can. We want everyone to do and be the best they can. That means we have to learn to move beyond what we **know**, to what we **do**, and we have to make it a new habit.

When caring for someone else, it is very easy to focus all of your energy on the other person. It is not uncommon to forget that we, as humans, are all alike. We have bodies that need our attention. We have needs that must be met. These are the things that allow us to not only survive, but thrive.

So today, I invite you to take a half hour out of your day to watch or just listen to this [video from Teepa on the limbic system](#). As you are watching, consider the following:

- How does your brain respond when you have a need?
- Is it a **want** or a **need**?
- How do you communicate these with those around you?
- What about the person you are caring for?
- Do you know their **likes**?
- Are you able to recognize their distress?
- How do they communicate with you?
- What can you do to ease the distress communication may be causing them?

Understanding ourselves is a gateway to better understanding others. Look carefully, listen carefully, pay attention to all the cues they're giving you because they're trying to communicate with you. By understanding more about how our limbic system works, we may find the secret to understanding the distress that people living with dementia are trying to communicate, and only then can we change what we **do** to provide better support.