WHAT IS HAPPENING TO GRANDPA?

A FAMILY TAKES CARE OF A LOVED ONE WITH ALZHEIMER’S

1.800.272.3900
www.alz.org
ALZHEIMER’S ASSOCIATION

The Alzheimer’s Association is aware of the difficulties faced by the family and caregivers of a person affected by Alzheimer’s. Without the right resources and support, these difficulties often get worse with time.

That is why we present What Is Happening To Grandpa?, a “fotonovela” that tells the story of a Latino family going through the phases of awareness, treatment and care of a very close family member who has Alzheimer’s.

This story offers practical suggestions ranging from recognizing the signs of Alzheimer’s to identifying medical and emotional support. If this “fotonovela” helps families understand the personal impact of Alzheimer’s disease, we have met our goal.

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ANA IS VERY WORRIED. HER GRANDFATHER LOOKS DISTANT.

SOMETIMES, HE DOES NOT JOIN IN DAILY ACTIVITIES ...

OR IN ACTIVITIES WITH THE FAMILY.

DON'T YOU THINK SOMETHING IS HAPPENING WITH GRANDPA?

WHY DO YOU ASK, ANA?

HE LOOKS DISORIENTED. ALSO, IT SEEMS HE IS LOSING HIS MEMORY.

IT'S JUST OLD AGE, ANA. HE'S GETTING OLDER.

SOME DAYS AFTER ...

WILL YOU GO TO THE GROCERY STORE AND PICK UP A FEW THINGS FOR DINNER?

SURE, I'LL GO. WHAT DO YOU NEED?
He still isn't here. What happened to him?

I need an onion, a pepper and tomatoes. Don't be long.

Onion, pepper and tomatoes.

Time passes...

Why is he taking so long?

Hi, mom. What's for dinner?

Grandpa left two hours ago to get some groceries, and he isn't back.

He still isn't here. What happened to him?

Should I go look for him?

Yes, please.

As Ana walks out, her neighbor, Josefina, comes in with grandpa.

Thank goodness you are all right.

I found him three blocks from here. He was very confused.
What about the groceries?

What groceries?

We were so worried! Where were you?

I think grandpa is not well.

It’s just old age, Ana.

What groceries?

Thank goodness Josefina found you! That’s all that matters.

No, this is different. It looks like what my aunt Lola had - Alzheimer’s disease.

At the dinner table, the family gathers to talk about what happened to grandpa.
My aunt lost her memory gradually. She was often confused and wandered away.

What is that?

It is a disease that affects the brain.

I recommend you take him to Dr. Villanueva. She treated my aunt. She is a very good doctor.

Let’s not forget to tell her he got lost when he went for groceries.

Ok, let’s take him to the doctor.

Ana calls to make a doctor’s appointment.
A general physical is given to check blood pressure, heart rate and breathing, among other vital signs.

Days later, at the doctor’s office...

Is this just old age?

I’ve noticed he is confused and it seems he has lost interest in things he once enjoyed.

My grandpa went shopping and got lost.

I’m very worried because his moods change quickly.

Sometimes, he mistakes me for someone else.

I’ll need to run some tests.

The doctor takes the medical history, including previous illnesses, surgeries and medications.

The appointment with Dr. Villanueva will be next Monday at 2 p.m.
TWO WEEKS LATER ...

¿Cuáles son los resultados, doctora?

What are the results of the tests?

Josefina was right! I knew grandpa was not well.

Then it's not old age.

Alzheimer's disease progresses slowly. Right now there is no cure, but there are medicines to treat it.

Tests of short-term memory and mental state are given.

Tests indicate that your father has Alzheimer's.

You have to take care of grandpa the best you can. Don't leave him alone.

Now, grandpa needs us all more than ever.
YOU ARE SICK, AND WE NEED TO TAKE CARE OF YOU.

DON’T FORGET THAT HE NEEDS REGULAR CHECKUPS. ALZHEIMER’S IS A LONG-TERM DISEASE.

THANK YOU, DOCTOR.

10 WARNING SIGNS OF ALZHEIMER’S

1. MEMORY LOSS (LIKE FORGETTING WHAT HAPPENED THE PREVIOUS DAY)
2. DIFFICULTY PERFORMING FAMILIAR TASKS (FOR EXAMPLE, NOT REMEMBERING THE WAY HOME OR HOW TO USE COMMON ITEMS, SUCH AS A FORK)
3. PROBLEMS WITH LANGUAGE (NOT BEING ABLE TO FIND THE RIGHT WORDS TO EXPRESS YOURSELF)
4. DISORIENTATION TO TIME AND PLACE (FOR INSTANCE, NOT WEARING CLOTHES APPROPRIATE FOR THE OCCASION OR THE SEASON)
5. POOR OR DECREASED JUDGMENT (BEING UNABLE TO UNDERSTAND WHY IT IS NECESSARY TO LOOK BEFORE CROSSING THE STREET)
6. PROBLEMS WITH ABSTRACT THINKING (LIKE ADDING OR SUBTRACTING)
7. MISPLACING THINGS (FOR EXAMPLE, LEAVING SHOES INSIDE THE REFRIGERATOR)
8. CHANGES IN MOOD OR BEHAVIOR (LIKE GOING FROM INTENSE HAPPINESS TO A DEEP DEPRESSION)
9. CHANGES IN PERSONALITY (FOR INSTANCE, A TALKATIVE PERSON WHO BECOMES VERY WITHDRAWN)
10. LOSS OF INITIATIVE (LACK OF WILL TO MAKE SIMPLE DECISIONS)
It's good you understand this now. That's what happened with my Aunt Lola.

And he'll get worse with time.

Yes, the doctor said it would be like that.

I've seen him like this before, forgetting things that just happened.

We went to the doctor, dad. Don't you remember?

Why did we go to the doctor?

The doctor gave us the diagnosis today. Our grandpa has Alzheimer's disease.

Well, we will be ready.

AFTER GOING TO THE DOCTOR, THE WHOLE FAMILY MEETS BACK HOME.

HOW DID IT GO?

AFTER GOING TO THE DOCTOR, THE WHOLE FAMILY MEETS BACK HOME.

WE WENT TO THE DOCTOR, DAD. DON'T YOU REMEMBER?

WHY DID WE GO TO THE DOCTOR?

YES, THE DOCTOR SAID IT WOULD BE LIKE THAT.

IT'S GOOD YOU UNDERSTAND THIS NOW. THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED WITH MY AUNT LOLA.

I'VE SEEN HIM LIKE THIS BEFORE, FORGETTING THINGS THAT JUST HAPPENED.

AND HE'LL GET WORSE WITH TIME.

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One day...

And this? Shoes in the refrigerator?

Grandpa is barefoot!

Instead of putting his shoes on, he left them in the refrigerator.

Another day...

Hello, grandpa.

What are you doing? Who are you?

Yet another day...

This is becoming more difficult.

Here is the Alzheimer’s Association telephone number.

Alzheimer’s Association?

Yes, it’s a non-profit organization that helps people who have Alzheimer’s and their families.

And they have people who speak Spanish.
ANA CALLS THE ALZHEIMER’S ASSOCIATION.

I'M GOING TO CALL.

YES, MISS. MY GRANDPA HAS ALZHEIMER’S. WE WANT TO KNOW HOW TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF HIM.

I AM GOING TO MAKE AN APPOINTMENT FOR YOU TO SEE A SOCIAL WORKER IN YOUR CITY.

THANK YOU. IS THERE A FEE FOR THIS?

OH NO, THERE IS NO CHARGE FOR THE CONSULTATION.

THE FAMILY MEETS WITH THE SOCIAL WORKER.

IT LOOKS LIKE GRANDPA’S SYMPTOMS ARE VERY SERIOUS.

IT’S IMPORTANT TO HAVE A CARE PLAN FOR GRANDPA.
With all this, my grades are dropping. I am not studying anymore.

To do that, you need to take care of yourselves.

My grades are low, and I am not even playing soccer.

I would love to have a little time to rest!

My wife is so exhausted. My children are doing poorly in school. What is happening to my family?

You need to manage the family stress and dedicate some time to yourselves.

Raul and Ana, you both need to set some time aside to study.
Mrs. Echeverría, you need time to rest.

You're right. I will spend more time with my father.

There is no cure for Alzheimer's yet, but together you can handle the situation better.

WHAT TO DO TO REDUCE STRESS IN THE FAMILY

1. Go to the doctor as early as possible to get a diagnosis and treatment for the person with Alzheimer's.
2. Find support in your community, such as adult day care centers.
3. Become an educated caregiver, and educate the rest of your family.
4. Get emotional help, and don't lose contact with people.
5. Take care of yourself.
6. Manage your level of stress.
7. Accept changes as they occur.
8. Do legal and financial planning.
9. Be realistic about how much you can do.
10. Give yourself credit, and try not to feel guilty.
Alzheimer’s is gradual, and it slowly gets worse. After three years, Grandpa’s condition has worsened.

He rarely speaks anymore.

He doesn’t want to eat.

He forgets many things and doesn’t want to take a bath.

In the morning, Raul goes to Grandpa’s room as usual.

Everybody tries to find Grandpa.

I looked in every room and outside the house. I can’t find him!

Miss Dobert, have you seen Grandpa?

No, I’m sorry. I haven’t.
THE NEXT MORNING, THEY FIND GRANDPA IN A PARK.

WE WERE SO WORRIED!

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

WE NEED TO MAKE SOME CHANGES TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF GRANDPA.

DAD MAKES THE HOUSE MORE SECURE. HE PUTS LOCKS ON THE DOOR AND ELIMINATES DANGERS LIKE SHARP AND POINTED OBJECTS.

WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?

THIS IS MORE DIFFICULT THAN I THOUGHT. HE IS GETTING WORSE.

WE'RE GOING TO TAKE SOME PRECAUTIONS FOR HIS OWN SAFETY.

GRANDPA! THANK GOODNESS WE FOUND YOU!

YOU SCARED ALL OF US!

WE WERE SO WORRIED!

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DAD MAKES THE HOUSE MORE SECURE. HE PUTS LOCKS ON THE DOOR AND ELIMINATES DANGERS LIKE SHARP AND POINTED OBJECTS.
Mom tells the neighbors.

We need to take Grandpa to the doctor again. He is getting much worse.

OK, let’s call the doctor.

At the doctor’s office ...

How is your grandpa doing?

He has gotten much worse since the last time we were here.

He doesn’t eat well. He doesn’t want to take a bath. He doesn’t even recognize us.

I have noticed that Mr. Echeverría can no longer tell us when he is in pain.

These are all signs that Alzheimer’s is progressing.
Call the Alzheimer’s Association.

What can we do to prevent him from leaving the house unattended?

That’s why it’s important that you bring him in for regular checkups.

Call the Alzheimer’s Association.

And many other programs as well. They are a great resource.

They have a program called Safe Return to deal with that situation ...
They can help you make a plan for taking care of grandpa.

Alzheimer’s Association Safe Return® is a nationwide identification and support program that offers help when a person with Alzheimer’s is lost or found away from home.

Assistance is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If a person is missing, one call immediately activates a community support network to help reunite the individual with his or her caregiver. There is a one-time fee to enroll.

To enroll or receive more information, call or visit:
1.888.572.8566
www.alz.org/safereturn
The family organizes to take care of grandpa.

Meanwhile, they continue with their regular activities.

The bracelet identifies a person in the Safe Return Program.
RAUL STARTS TO PLAY SOCCER AGAIN.

DAD IS VERY CARING, SPENDING TIME WITH GRANDPA.

ANA IMPROVES IN SCHOOL.

MOM SPENDS TIME WITH HER FRIENDS AGAIN.
THE ALZHEIMER’S ASSOCIATION, the world leader in Alzheimer research and support, is the largest voluntary health organization dedicated to finding prevention methods, treatments and an eventual cure for Alzheimer’s.

Visit our Web site or call our 24-hour toll-free helpline:

www.alz.org  1.800.272.3900

alzheimer’s association

the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer