

# Helping with Alzheimers

*How might you assist an older adult with Alzheimer's disease?*

<sup>1</sup> Riding her bicycle home from school, Esperanza turns the corner and notices Mrs. Pellegrino standing in the middle of the sidewalk, holding her beloved cat, Charlotte. Esperanza parks her bike and smiles as she walks up to greet Mrs. Pellegrino.

<sup>2</sup> "Hi, Mrs. Pellegrino," says Esperanza. "Where are you going?"

<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Pellegrino doesn't return Esperanza's smile or answer the question, but instead she looks a little bit confused. Esperanza remembers her parents telling her that Mrs. Pellegrino has Alzheimer's disease, which causes people to become confused and have trouble remembering. Mrs. Pellegrino appears somewhat dazed right now, so Esperanza decides to help.

<sup>4</sup> "It looks like we might have a thunderstorm soon," she declares. "Why don't I help you get Charlotte home?"

<sup>5</sup> Esperanza extends her hand to Mrs. Pellegrino, who gratefully accepts it, and the pair begin walking down Russet Street toward Mrs. Pellegrino's condominium a block away. As they ascend the stairway, Mrs. Pellegrino begins to smile. "I couldn't remember the way home, and I was beginning to worry," she says. Esperanza returns her smile, escorting Mrs. Pellegrino and Charlotte indoors. Satisfied that they are now secure, Esperanza retrieves her bicycle and rides home. Pedaling into the garage, she is relieved to see that her mother's car is there. Esperanza wants to discuss what just happened.

<sup>6</sup> "Mom," she says, walking into the kitchen, "I just helped Mrs. Pellegrino find her way home. She was on the next block, but she didn't seem to remember where she lived. She must have been following Charlotte and got confused."

<sup>7</sup> Esperanza's mom looks at her with furrowed eyebrows and then walks over to the desk where she keeps her book with important phone numbers.

<sup>8</sup> "I have her daughter's number here. Why don't we telephone her and make sure she knows what happened. I'm certain she'll want to hear about this, because if Mrs. Pellegrino's Alzheimer's is getting worse, she could accidentally injure herself. After we call, let's go over and talk to her for a bit."

<sup>9</sup> Esperanza and her mom call Mrs. Pellegrino's daughter, who thanks them for letting her know about the situation and says she will be at her mother's house in a few minutes. As they head over to Mrs. Pellegrino's condominium, Esperanza's mom tells her a little more about Alzheimer's disease. Esperanza discovers that confusion and memory loss are the symptoms most people know about, but other symptoms of Alzheimer's include difficulty understanding visual images, losing the ability to retrace steps, withdrawal from social activities, and changes in mood and personality. Esperanza resolves to help Mrs. Pellegrino as much as she can. She often has a few hours free after school, and she resolves to spend some of that time with Mrs. Pellegrino. She could help run errands or complete other tasks that might be challenging because of the Alzheimer's disease.

<sup>10</sup> "I'm proud of you, Esperanza," says her mom. "I know that Mrs. Pellegrino's daughter has a part-time job and children as well, so she'll probably be happy for your help. Let's go see what we can do to make Mrs. Pellegrino's experience with Alzheimer's disease more bearable."

<sup>11</sup> Esperanza smiles and squeezes her mom's hand as they walk down the street to help their neighbor.



Read the passage “Helping with Alzheimer’s” then answer the following questions:

1. After reading the passage, specify the genre of the story. Justify your answer using supporting evidence with reference to its features.

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2. According to the opening lines of paragraph 3, “Mrs. Pellegrino doesn’t return Esperanza’s smile or answer the question, but instead she looks a little bit confused.” What do you think is the reason for Mrs. Pellegrino’s confusion?

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3. Alzheimer’s disease has a negative impact on people. Explain.

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4. Mrs. Pellegrino appears somewhat **dazed** right now, so Esperanza decides to help. Find a synonym for the underlined word.

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5. What details does the author include to portray Esperanza as a compassionate person?

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6. “Let’s go see what we can do to make Mrs. Pellegrino’s experience with Alzheimer’s disease more *bearable*.” What does the word in italics mean?

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7. “I’m proud of you, Esperanza,” says her mom. Why did the author use inverted commas?

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8. From paragraph 1, find an idiom that means to pass a critical point.

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9. What is the effect of using the verb **relieved** in the sentence: “Pedaling into the garage, she is relieved to see that her mother’s car is there”?

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10. List some of Alzheimer’s symptoms that people are not familiar with.

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