



Caregiver Network News

*A newsletter for
caregivers of loved ones
with memory disorders*

Help Support MemoryCare Families!

**GIFTS FROM NOW UNTIL JUNE
30 WILL GO TWICE AS FAR!**



**Now through June 30th, any new or increased donation to MemoryCare
will be matched dollar for dollar, up to \$50,000!**

Help us serve families by donating today.

*This matching gift is made possible in part by Dolly and Rakesh Agarwal,
Deerfield Episcopal Retirement Community, and Anonymous Donors
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Giving NOW will help us reach our goal
AND
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ANSWERING DIFFICULT QUESTIONS

If you are caring for a person who has dementia, then you probably hear a lot of questions throughout your day: "Where are my shoes?" "Where do we keep the cups?" "Are these all my pills?" "Where are we going?" "When is Suzi coming?" "When are we having lunch?" "What day is this?" "Where is my jacket?" "Aren't we going somewhere today?" "What happened to my car?" You try to keep your patience as you answer but you find yourself becoming exasperated, especially when you keep hearing the same questions over and over despite having answered each one. As the day goes on, you hear the rising irritation in your voice - and by the end of the day, you know if you hear just one more question you're going to scream.



Welcome to the world of short-term memory loss...the hallmark feature of most forms of dementia.



It seems, to an outsider, such a small annoyance...but until you've lived with it day-to-day, you cannot appreciate how it can wear on an otherwise equitable and good-natured person. You've taken the caregiver classes, you understand what's going on, but honestly, doesn't he remember ANYTHING I tell him? Doesn't she know she's already asked me this six times this morning?

And if the constant stream of questions isn't enough, what about those tricky, impossible-to-answer ones that come out of nowhere? "I want to go home." "What's happening to me?" "Are you going to put me somewhere?" You feel like whatever you say will be upsetting. You HAVE to come up with an answer...but what? Remember, skip the facts and focus on the feelings.

One of the most difficult things caregivers must learn is **how to change the way they communicate** - how to censor what they say. It isn't LYING ([click here to read *Lying with Love* from CNN's May-June 2017 issue](#)) - it is simply tailoring your answer to what your loved one can handle.

"That sounds manipulative," you may say. But consider this: it isn't about honesty or dishonesty, it's simply about accommodating a person living with a disability. You accommodate people every day who are living with limited mobility, or with conditions like diabetes or COPD. A person who is living with dementia is living with a disability, too - their disability is **understanding, processing, and remembering information**.

By changing how you give them information, you are accommodating their disability. You are being compassionate and understanding of their condition. And you are giving them much-needed support and assistance in a respectful and caring way.

So with this thought in mind, how can you respond to some of those hard-to-answer comments?

By keeping one word foremost in your mind:

REASSURANCE.



Because your loved one's brain doesn't work like it used to, their world is a rolling sea of confusion most of the time. They aren't being difficult on purpose. They're trying to keep up, but their brains just can't hold onto all the information that gets thrown at them. They're doing the best they can with what they have to work with.

Answering their questions with information ("Today is Tuesday") might click...but does it stick? In a brain with short-term memory loss, probably not. Instead, try to focus your answer on something that's comforting, supportive, or cheerful. "Today is Tuesday - and we don't have a single thing we have to do today except be together!" or "Today is Tuesday - it's your ice cream day. What flavor do you want, chocolate or caramel?"

Coming up with good answers for difficult questions can be a bit more challenging, but if you'll keep the "R" word (Reassurance) in mind, you'll get the hang of it:

"I can't do anything any more."

"I know some things are hard now, but you do a lot of things well. Nobody empties the dishwasher better than you do!" (Find something positive they can still do, and never miss a chance to thank them for doing it.)

"Do I have Alzheimer's?"

"Yes, you do - but I'm going to be right with you, and we'll get through this together." (This answer works even if your loved one has another kind of dementia. Remember, the goal is to reassure them, not bog them down with facts.)

"You just want to put me in a home."

(humor) *"The heck I do! Who would be here for me to kiss goodnight?"*

or

(comfort) *"You're my buddy/honey/sugar lamb. I'm not letting you go!"*

(Notice that you didn't answer "yes" or "no" to this question. There may come a day when your loved one will move to a long-term care facility, but there's no need to bring that up at this point.)

"Where are we going?"

"We're going out to lunch at that place you like. You always enjoy the hamburger there because it has that yummy mustard." (You may have several places you're going, lunch being only one of them, but choose only ONE thing to answer, and if possible make it something positive. Note how many upbeat messages there are: "that place you like," "enjoy," and "yummy")

"I want to go home."

"I know you do, home is a good place, isn't it? What's your favorite thing about home?"

(Again, you sidestepped the question of "going home" - there's no good answer for that one - and instead just zeroed in on talking about "home." Also, don't assume you know which "home" they mean - it could be a place they lived as a child, or it could simply be a time they are remembering. Either one is good to reminisce about. Follow their lead.)

"Where's my mother?"

"Yes, your mother is special, isn't she? I'll bet she's a good cook, too!"

(Same idea as the "going home" question - avoiding the question but not the topic. If you know something specific about Mom, bring it up - "she makes the best lemon meringue pie!" If you don't, keep it general and somewhere around the person's childhood ("I'll bet she made you do your homework when you were in school!").

"Is my mother dead?"

"Yes, she is. I know you loved her and she loved you. What do you miss most about her?"

(Dementia doesn't wipe out a person's entire memory at once. Your loved one might remember something vaguely - like trying to recall a dream the next morning - and may ask for clarification. Since they've brought it up, this is a time when you should answer simply and truthfully, then help them reminisce about Mom when she was living, rather than focusing on her death.)

"Am I crazy?"

"No, you're not crazy. Your brain/Alzheimer's is playing tricks on you again. It's OK, I'll be right here to help when you need me."

Learning how to communicate differently may seem difficult at first, but ultimately it will make things easier - for both of you. The next time you hear one of those difficult questions, skip the facts and focus on the feelings. Remember, when you speak from the heart, you'll find the right answers.



CAREGIVER WISDOM

WHAT I'VE LEARNED at my SUPPORT GROUP:

- *I've learned to make the choice to change our relationship even though you grieve every step of the way.*
- *Hearing other people's stories is comforting because you don't feel so isolated.*
- *I've learned to say to myself, "who is it bothering?" when he does weird things.*
- *I knew I wasn't supposed to argue but I didn't know how to do that. I learned how by coming here.*
- *I learned not to be surprised when things change...and they do!*
- *He does a lot better when I can remember to respond to his feelings instead than his intellect.*
- *Don't Poke the Bear!*



UPCOMING MEMORYCARE EVENTS

Upcoming MemoryCare Educational Events

Join us Thursday afternoons **2:00-3:30pm** in the **Bernhardt Education room at the SECU Center for MemoryCare** to learn more about caring for your loved one and yourself!

Courses are **free and open to the public.**

Donations are deeply appreciated.

Registration is required due to limited space. To register, call **(828) 771-2931** or email office@memorycare.org with your full name, phone number, physical address, and which course(s) you would like to attend.

April 25th	Meg Word - Sims, MD - MemoryCare Staff Physician "Understanding Lewy Body Disease"
May 2nd	Cameron Kempson, M.Ed - Director of Education, SimplyHome "Assistive Technology: Easing your Caregiver Journey"
May 9th	Earl Rhoades, Psy.D - CarePartners Rehabilitation "Brain Games, What Works?"
May 16th	David Kirkman, Former NC Special Deputy Attorney "You, Too, Can Fight the Elder Fraud Industry"
May 23rd	Bill Smutny, MemoryCare Caregiver "Navigating the Alzheimer's Maze, Part 1"
June 6th	Bill Smutny, MemoryCare Caregiver "Navigating the Alzheimer's Maze, Part 2"
June 13th	Virginia Templeton, MD, MemoryCare Staff Physician "Understanding the Goals of Care with Progression of Dementia"
June 20th	Mary Donnelly, MemoryCaregivers Network Coordinator "Say This Not That - Learning How to Communicate with Dementia"
June 27th	David Johnson, MD and Lindsey Kremer, BSW - MemoryCare Staff Physician and CareManager "Exercise and Brain Health"



Notable Quotable



"The human race has only one effective weapon,
and that is laughter."

-Mark Twain



ONGOING PROGRAMS

Open to the Public

MEMORYCAREGIVERS NETWORK **PEER SUPPORT & EDUCATION GROUPS**

FLETCHER GROUP

First Tuesdays, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

Fletcher 7th Day Adventist Church

Howard Gap Road and Naples Road, Fletcher, N.C.
(just past Park Ridge Hospital)

NEW HOPE GROUP

Third Tuesdays, 1:00-3:00 p.m.

New Hope Presbyterian Church
3070 Sweeten Creek Road, Asheville, N.C. 28803
(across from Givens Estates)

NORTH ASHEVILLE GROUP

Fourth Tuesdays, 1:00-3:00pm

NEW LOCATION!

Newbridge Baptist Church
199 Elkwood Avenue and Merrimon Avenue, Asheville NC, 28804
(enter at glass doors adjacent to the gym)

Network meetings are open to the public.

*The Network relies on charitable support to keep its program going.
To make a donation, [CLICK HERE](#)*

For more information about the MemoryCaregivers Network, contact:

Mary Donnelly
828.230.4143
network@memorycare.org

Pat Hilgendorf
828.301.0740
patricia.hilgendorf@gmail.com

"CAREGIVER COLLEGE"



MemoryCare's ongoing educational series for caregivers

A series of six lectures will be provided for anyone caring for a person with a memory disorder. The program is taught by one of the MemoryCare physicians, and is designed to improve caregiver understanding of different aspects of dementia care. Related presentation materials will be provided.

There is no cost for families who are enrolled in MemoryCare. For those not enrolled, the cost is \$180 for the 6-part series. Scholarship funds are available, contact MemoryCare for more information on fee waivers.

Course Content:

What Is Dementia?

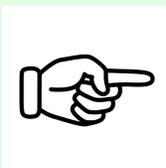
Transitioning from Independence to Interdependence

Functional and Behavioral Changes of Dementia

Dementia Treatment Options & Risk Reduction

Caring for the Caregiver

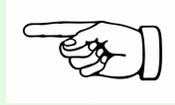
Dementia and Legal Planning Issues



***The next ASHEVILLE session of Caregiver College
begins Thursday, July 11,
and continues on consecutive Thursdays through August 15
2:00-5:00pm
SECU Center for MemoryCare
100 Far Horizons Lane, Asheville***

**(If you are not able to attend Caregiver College this summer,
the FALL session will begin on October 3.)**

**The next WAYNESVILLE session has not yet been scheduled.
Watch this space for details!**



Do you need a program for a group event?

The MemoryCaregivers Network staff presents on a variety of subjects, including Recognizing Early Warning Signs of Memory Loss, Facts and Fiction about Dementia, Better Communication Techniques, and more.

We are happy to speak at your event to raise awareness and knowledge about Dementia.

Contact Mary Donnelly at network@memorycare.org

To see a list of
OTHER COMMUNITY RESOURCES
for those living with dementia and their care partners,
[CLICK HERE](#)

Caregiver Network News and The MemoryCaregivers Network are auxiliary programs of



We rely on charitable donations to continue these programs!

*Please consider donating...
perhaps in honor of a loved one's birthday...
or a memorial...
or a sustaining gift to support families like yours
who depend on the services that MemoryCare provides!*

Make a difference. Make a donation.

[Click here to donate.](#)

For more information about MemoryCare, click this link to visit our website:

www.MemoryCare.org

Thank you for your interest and support!

MemoryCare is a charitable non-profit organization whose mission is three-fold:
To provide specialized medical care to older adults with cognitive impairment;
to support caregivers with education, counseling, and improved access to services; and to provide community
education.

Caregiver Network News is written and edited by Mary Donnelly.
Contact network@memorycare.org for more information.

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