



Caregiver Network News

A newsletter for caregivers of loved ones with dementia



Nationally Recognized Pioneers in
Dementia Care
Supporting Families Since 2000

The TOP 20 in 2020: *ADVICE from CAREGIVERS*

As a salute to MemoryCare's 20th Anniversary, CNN will be presenting its 'Top 20 Lists for 2020' series. This month we feature tips compiled from other caregivers: what they have learned during their journeys with dementia – what worked, what didn't, what they found valuable, and what they would want others to know.

(PLEASE NOTE: THESE ARE DIRECT QUOTES FROM CAREGIVERS AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT AN ENDORSEMENT OR RECOMMENDATION FROM MEMORYCARE OR THE MEMORYCAREGIVERS NETWORK)

1. Get legal and estate documents prepared right away while your loved one is still capable. You will be in a mess without a Power of Attorney and Healthcare Power of Attorney. If you already have them, have them reviewed and/or updated. Don't wait. Always keep a copy of them with you.

2. Get on the waiting list of at least one long-term care facility. Do this sooner rather than later, you will be glad you did. You can always decline if a room becomes available and you won't lose your place in line. All things being equal, choose a facility that is close, this will be important. Not doing this will mean you won't have something in place if/when you need it.
3. Utilize an Adult Day program. The staff will take care of any problems you can envision with the process.
4. Try to reduce hospital visits when possible. Hospital stays are very stressful for you and the patient. In many instances, there are other options. Best plan is to talk with the doctor BEFORE you need to go to the hospital so that he/she knows your wishes.
5. Get to a support group. You will find out you are not alone, you will learn new skills, and you will feel better. I have learned more from the MemoryCare Support Group than anywhere. Listening to others' challenges and how to handle them has been very helpful. The Support Group over the years has given me valuable tools - developing patience, saying "I'm sorry," learning to respond better in difficult situations. I always pick up a few "pearls" in every meeting I attend. Sometimes I am skeptical that the advice or method will work, but quite often very surprised at how well the difficult situations are resolved if I use the advice provided.
6. MemoryCare's Caregiver College. You can go more than one time if they have room. There is so much to learn. It helped me understand dementia more when they told us how it affects a person's brain and the rest of the body.
7. Be very wary of travel. Have a plan to monitor your loved one in airports, bathrooms, hotels, public areas. If you are doubtful, don't go.
8. Don't argue if the doctor recommends that you take away driving privileges. Understand that this is common with dementia. Expect anger and resentment, but it is better than an accident. Hold your explanations and just say that you're sorry but the doctor recommended it.
9. Secure doors to prevent wandering. I was able to secure doors using a simple bungee cord.
10. If your loved one is in a long-term care facility, visit as often as possible and be extra kind to the staff. It's a tough job, they will appreciate it, and your loved one will probably get better care.
11. Learn to let go....of the way you like things to look....of the way you want your loved one to act....of the things that you think must be done each day...in essence, of the way it was. When I could let go of what was, there was room for what is. Which means I suffered less and enjoyed the present with my loved one.
12. Find ways to connect, other than through conversation. Love can be expressed through a gentle touch, a warm smile, and a caring presence. Words are often not necessary, or helpful. Some of my most precious memories of these last years with my loved one are her smile when she saw a pretty color, the way she relaxed when I massaged her feet, and many other non-verbal experiences. Learn how to create an experience for your loved one and a memory for yourself.
13. Loving, compassionate care of yourself is essential! Our culture teaches us to give and

sacrifice for others. Caregiving done well, however, is a balancing act, meeting your needs and those of your loved one. Remember, you can't give from an empty well, so fill yourself often with plenty of sleep, good nourishing food, and activities you love.

14. Learn and keep learning. Just a little upfront knowledge to tilt the curve would have been so helpful to me in the beginning. Listen to the experts and learn from them the best interactive techniques. Best practices are often counter-intuitive.

15. Try to keep in mind what your loved one was like before dementia took over. It's so easy these days to see only someone who is less and less capable of doing things for himself and who can't follow anything but the simplest of directions. It's frustrating for both of us, to say the least, when my husband just can't do very much any more. But lately I was looking through a box with pictures and letters from when he was in his 20s. To look at those pictures and letters and to recall that once he was energetic, curious, and passionate about so many things is to remember what I loved about him in the first place, and it helps me to be more patient with him now.

16. Things take a lot longer to do. Plan to leave at least a half-hour before you need to for appointments. Collect his billfold, glasses, jacket, etc., yourself, and hand them to him as you are leaving. If you give them to him earlier he may put them down and forget where they are.

17. Signs may or may not work. Clip board with information for him when I am gone worked for a short time, but big signs in bathroom to use flushable wipes didn't work. Reminder for him to take meds only worked some of the time so not dependable.

18. Walking every day! We visit with others we pass and enjoy the socializing. We are both convinced that these walks have hugely enhanced our lives.

19. Best advice so far: It is absolutely necessary to sometimes manipulate situations, withhold information, and take charge without consultation with my partner – and not feel guilty about it. You do what is best for them at the moment, so don't feel guilty, don't look back, and be happy with the way you are able to handle many difficult situations.

20. Don't poke the bear.

The Power of HUMOR

Attention Caregivers:

It's time to get a little more laughter in your life!!

Let's face it, caregiving can be pretty intense, especially when it's for someone with dementia. After a while, we can find ourselves focused on the tough side of things and weighed down with the seriousness of it all. Caregivers are often overwhelmed with the constant challenges of managing the disease to the exclusion of all else...and in so doing, they increase not only their



own stress level, but that of the person in their care.

One wife was at her wits' end, exhausted with trying to deal with her husband's symptoms and her own impatience. That evening she came across a TV channel showing some old sitcoms – "I Love Lucy" and "Bewitched" and "My Three Sons," shows that she and her husband used to enjoy in their earlier years. Before she realized it, her tension faded, her shoulders relaxed, and they both found themselves laughing out loud. "It was the best evening I could remember!" she said later.



Humor reminds us that life is still good, despite all that may not be going our way.

Humor can put a positive spin on what otherwise might be a downer.

Humor is Nature's potion to make us feel good.

As it turns out, Readers Digest was right -
laughter isn't just fun, it has medicinal benefits:

Laughter relaxes the whole body. A good, hearty laugh relieves physical tension and stress, leaving your muscles relaxed for up to 45 minutes after.

Laughter boosts the immune system. Laughter decreases stress hormones and increases immune cells and infection-fighting antibodies, thus improving your resistance to disease.

Laughter triggers the release of endorphins, the body's natural feel-good chemicals. Endorphins promote an overall sense of well-being and can even temporarily relieve pain.

Laughter protects the heart. Laughter improves the function of blood vessels and increases blood flow, which can help protect you against a heart attack and other cardiovascular problems.

Laughter lightens anger's heavy load. Nothing diffuses anger and conflict faster than a shared laugh. Looking at the funny side can put problems into perspective and enable you to move on from confrontations without holding onto bitterness or resentment.

Laughter may even help you to live longer. A study in Norway found that people with a strong sense of humor outlived those who don't laugh as much. The difference was particularly notable for those battling cancer.



(reprinted from helpguide.org, November 2019)



Humor also has particular benefits for people living with dementia. Research consistently

shows that a positive mood shift, whether from a loved one's visit, watching a funny video, or just sharing a few Knock-Knock jokes, can last long past the actual event – and in the case of someone with dementia, long past the time that the person remembers it.

So how do you find laughter in the midst of caregiving?

First, **try to look for the funny side of situations**. When your loved one does something off the wall, instead of reacting with irritation, try being silly! For instance, an exasperated daughter, after her mother insisted she wasn't the one who had left the ice cream out on the counter, blurted out, "Well, Mom, it must have been your evil twin!" That made both of them laugh – and gave the daughter a trick to avoid future arguments. And a caregiver husband learned to blame the dog, rather than his wife with Alzheimer's, when things turned up missing – "Well, Scamp must have buried it somewhere!" This takes practice, so keep trying.

Here are a few more suggestions for bringing laughter into your life:

Make a "Funny Bone" list of things guaranteed to make you laugh: a funny line from a movie or YouTube video, a picture or cartoon you've cut out, a joke, a memory of some past event, etc. Put it on the refrigerator or your bathroom mirror where you'll see it every day. Be sure to read some out loud.

Watch your favorite funny movies or TV shows. Find them on the internet. Record them or have the DVD so you can watch any time you need a lift. Here's one on YouTube to get you started: this animal voiceover video cracks me up every time: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KQ8dNks3-M>

Be around people who make you laugh – or at least talk with them on the phone every day.



Listen to other people laugh to get you going:

- Watch a program with a laugh track or audience (think Johnny Carson videos).
- Take a "laughter yoga" class – you can even do one online (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGNOF8DVIPO>).
- Search the internet for a stuffed animal that laughs when someone walks by or squeezes it (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RJIBDC6V6-U>). It's practically impossible not to start laughing along with it - and be sure to share it with the person in your care.
- Remember that laughter is contagious - let it infect you!

Get one of those **Joke-a-Day calendars** to start your day with a smile!

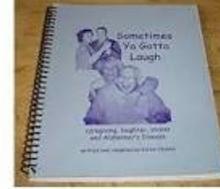
If you just can't quite muster a laugh, **start with a smile**. It's contagious, too, and is the first step towards a feeling of well-being.

Wear a silly hat or a funny button. Get a collection of them and wear a different one every day. Give one to your loved one, too. As Victor Borge once said, "Laughter is the shortest distance between two people."

Fake it. Studies have shown that you get the benefits from "simulated laughter" even when you don't necessarily feel like it. Begin by just going through the motions, chances are you'll start to feel better and will do it on your own.

Check out *Sometimes Ya Gotta Laugh!* by Black Mountain

resident Karen Stobbe, from MemoryCare's Resource Library or available on Amazon.



Nobody is saying that having dementia - or caring for someone who has it – is a laughing matter. Finding some humor in your day won't fix anything, but it sure can help put things in a better perspective. So start your own Funny Bone list, look at it every day...and see if a little laughter doesn't brighten your day!

Knock, knock.
Who's there?
A little old lady.
A little old lady who?
Hey, I didn't know
you could yodel!

GH

SAVE THE DATE!



Strategies for Dementia Care: Teepa Snow Shares Her Positive Approach® to Care

WHEN:

Wednesday, September 23, 2020 8:30am -3pm

WHERE:

Mountain Area Health Education Center (MAHEC)
Education Building, Blue Ridge Room
121 Hendersonville Road
Asheville, NC 28803

PRICE: \$15.00

*7 CEU credit hours will be available for participants
Breakfast and lunch will be provided*

With an aging population, dementia is an increasingly common challenge faced by professional and family caregivers alike. This conference will help caregivers better understand behaviors of those with dementia and effective strategies for communication and engagement. Participants will learn about normal aging, ways to reduce risks of dementia, and ways to facilitate meaningful interactions and activities for those with the disease.

Teepa Snow, MS, OTR/L, FAOTA is an occupational therapist with 40 years of clinical and academic experience. She uses humor and her extensive expertise to teach about brain changes that occur with dementia, the impact of these changes on behavior, and practical strategies to optimize care and support for those with dementia as the disease progresses over time. [Click here](#) for Teepa's full bio.

*Registration and further details will be available in early March, 2020.
Check this space in the next newsletter or visit www.memorycare.org for updates.*

Notable Quotable

"There is nothing in the world so irresistibly contagious as
laughter and good humor."

- Charles Dickens, *A Christmas Carol*



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, NC
(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, NC 28803
(across from Givens Estates)

NORTH ASHEVILLE GROUP

Fourth Tuesdays, 1:00-3:00pm

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 education series for caregivers

A series of six lectures will be provided for caregivers of persons with memory disorders. Sessions are designed to improve caregiver understanding of different aspects of dementia care. The course will be led by Margaret Noel, MD with guest speakers; attorney Caroline Knox and MemoryCaregivers Network Coordinator, Mary Donnelly. Related presentation materials will be provided. **Space is limited. You must register by calling our office at 828-771-2219.**

IMPORTANT: Thanks to grant funding to provide this course in a tele-education format, the normal fee of \$180 to attend Caregiver College is being waived for attendees. In exchange, attendees will be expected to complete a 3-part participation survey: one prior to, one immediately post, and a final one several months after the course.

Spring Caregiver College Dates:

*March 19 to April 23, 2020
2:00 - 5:30pm*

Course Content:

- **March 19** - What Is Dementia?
- **March 26** - Transitioning from Independence to Interdependence

- **April 2** - Functional and Behavioral Changes of Dementia
- **April 9** - Dementia Treatment Options & Risk Reduction
- **April 16** - Managing Caregiver Stress
- **April 23** - Dementia and Legal Planning Issues

Spring Caregiver College may be attended at The SECU Center for MemoryCare or as a live broadcast at one of the satellite locations listed. Please see www.memorycare.org for more details and directions:

Host
 Buncombe County
 The SECU Center for
 MemoryCare
 100 Far Horizons Lane
 Asheville, NC 28803

Satellite
 Haywood County
 Maple Leaf Adult Day
 63 Elmwood Way Ste. C100
 Waynesville, NC 28786
Live Broadcast

Satellite
 Henderson County
 Grace Lutheran Church
(Meeting in Stull Hall)
 1245 6th Avenue West
 Hendersonville, NC 28739
Live Broadcast

Summer and Fall Caregiver College Dates

*(Host location will be The SECU Center for MemoryCare;
 Satellite locations to be determined)*

July 9th to August 13th, 2020

Thursdays
 2-5:30 pm

October 15th to November 19th, 2020

Thursdays
 2-5:30 pm



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

CLICK HERE

Caregiver Network News and The MemoryCaregivers Network are auxiliary programs of



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

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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.

[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.

Thank you for your interest and support!

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