



Caregiver Network News

A newsletter for caregivers of loved ones with dementia



Nationally Recognized Pioneers in
Dementia Care
Supporting Families Since 2000

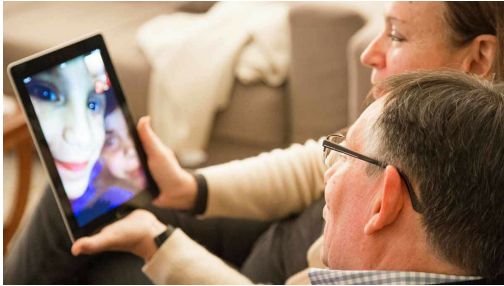


Be Healthy & Stay Well

- Avoid close contact with those who are sick
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Wear a face mask when in public settings

The TOP 20 in 2020:
**Top 20 Ways to Improve
VIRTUAL VISITS**

Due to the COVID shutdown, many families have had to change how they stay connected to their loved ones, whether at home or in long-term care settings. Many families have turned to technology to provide alternate means of staying in touch using tablets and virtual websites. Care facilities across the country have established new visiting restrictions which will probably remain in place for months to come. Some are trying window or door visits, and others are just relying on phone calls. Sometimes these methods are satisfactory, sometimes not so much. So be aware that some of the ideas below, while they make sense to you, might not work for a person whose brain isn't working up to par. Whether or not your person will respond to a virtual visit will depend in part on their particular type and stage of dementia, but here are a few things you could try that may help your visits go a little better:



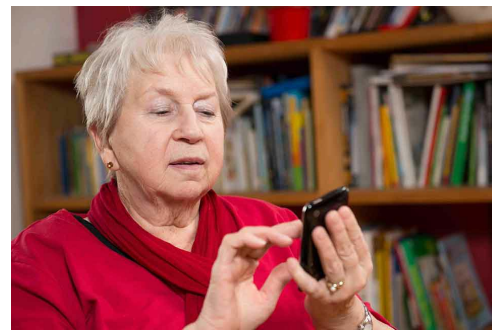
1. Most persons living with dementia will eventually need assistance in using any kind of technology. Even a cell phone becomes unfamiliar when you try to introduce FaceTime. You may need to conduct a visual tutorial through the door or enlist someone from the care facility to serve as the on-site operator. Some facilities will have tablets or other devices that you can utilize with your loved one; otherwise, you will have to provide one. Ask the staff what's available.
2. In-person visits can still work with distancing rules: if there's an outdoor area for your family member, try standing across the grass or on the other side of the fence.
3. If your loved one can't be outside, perhaps have them stand at a large window where they can see you. Bring along some large colorful signs: "We love you Mom!" or "Bob is the greatest!" Instead of trying to have a typical conversation, simply focus on creating a party atmosphere, perhaps bringing balloons or wearing funny hats. The goal isn't to exchange information, it's just to make your loved one feel special.
4. If your loved one uses a phone comfortably, you can augment window visits by talking with them at the same time via the phone.
5. The caveat with window/yard visits: depending on the person's level of dementia, these may help or they may make things worse. If the person you're visiting seems agitated or fixated on why you aren't coming inside, it might be that this isn't the best option for them for now.
6. Masks can be confusing or even frightening to a person with dementia. If you are at a safe distance, try starting the visit without it so they can see your whole face – then *let them see you put the mask on*. Or consider using a clear face shield instead so your mouth will be visible. Also, because your voice is muffled when you're wearing a mask, it makes it that much harder for the person to understand what you're saying, so remember to speak up.
7. Bring some humor into the situation. Make your mask appear funny – wear it with a clown nose or maybe Groucho Marx glasses. Cute animal prints are fun, but from far away they don't show up so you may need to do something with more visual impact.
8. Help a person with dementia become OK with wearing a mask. Provide them with a few different-colored or fun-print ones and ask them which color they're wearing that day... or if it's their "dragon mask" or "cookies mask." Ask what kind of masks other people are wearing. It may sound elementary to you, but for a person who sees masks all day long, it can help alleviate some anxiety.
9. When you can't visit in person, simply recording yourself giving a short message and then sending it to someone who then shows it Mom can be helpful. Make your message simple and upbeat: "Hi Mom, I know you miss me and I miss you too, but I'll be seeing you

soon!” or “Hi Dad, here I am in the garden! Don’t my tomatoes look great?” You can send several and even tailor some to address any particular needs that may arise: “Hi sweetheart, I know you’re worried about the kids. They are just fine. They’re eating their dinner now. It’s time for you to eat your dinner too. I wonder what’s for dessert?” While this won’t scratch your itch to see your loved one, it can often provide comfort for them in a difficult moment.

10. Be aware if your loved one becomes upset at the mention of things like virus, COVID restrictions, shutdown, isolation, social distancing, staying safe, getting sick, etc., and avoid mentioning them. Try to downplay the situation from “virus” to something less ominous like “a cold.” If they want to know why you aren’t coming, keep your answer short and comforting: “I want to be there, too. I will come just as soon as they open your building” or “...as soon as the doctor says it’s OK. I can’t wait to see you!”

11. Phone conversations may be challenging for a person with dementia due to language difficulties and comprehension. Even if your person still talks fairly normally, remember that trying to keep up with spoken words is difficult without the visuals to go with them. Slow down your speech, use shorter sentences, and allow some pauses in between to allow the person to process what you’ve said.

12. Limit how much you try to say in one visit/call. Talking about how things are going for you and what the grandkids are doing this summer and when your sister is coming will probably be more than a person with dementia can handle in one phone call. Consider breaking it down to one thing only rather than bouncing from one to the other.



13. Trying to have a typical conversation with a person living in a facility during the COVID situation is likely to run into a dead end. There’s not a lot going on in their world these days, so asking them to tell you about it may not be comforting for them. Besides, most of them aren’t able to remember details of their day, so they will probably not be able to answer your questions about what they’ve been doing and if they’ve been wearing their masks and what they’ve been eating and are they sleeping, etc. Don’t ask! If you want to know how they’re doing or if they’ve been eating, contact the staff directly.

14. Instead of focusing on Q&A during your phone call, try to make the call fun and upbeat. Do something that plays to the automatic and rhythmic part of the person’s brain that’s stronger than their language center – sing a song they’d know, or recite a nursery rhyme (“I remember when you read this to me when I was a little girl!”), or try a couple of Knock Knock jokes...anything that doesn’t pressure them into coming up with answers or information. The goal is to make it upbeat so that they retain a good feeling from the call instead of frustration or sadness.

15. Help them think about things they CAN remember. Ask them something about their early years, ages 10-20 (“What was it like to share a room with your little sister?” Or “Tell me about the pony you used to ride on the farm”). End the call by singing a song that the person knows (Jesus Loves Me, I’ve Been Working on the Railroad, Mares Eat Oats, Row Row Row Your Boat, You Are My Sunshine). Not only do you leave them with something familiar, the song will likely stay with them for a while, even if they don’t remember the rest of the call.

16. Think fewer questions, more reminiscing/jokes/songs. Here’s what one daughter reported after trying this technique with her mother who wasn’t responding to phone calls: *Between reading/singing the rhymes and telling simple stories about my memories of the tales our conversations have lasted 10-12 minutes. Mom even began to speak of her memories....*

17. If you want to try Zoom or Skype calls, plan ahead with others who can help facilitate the visit. For those living in a care facility, arrange it with a staff member to be the hands-on operator. Use the same principles you would for phone calls: speak slower, keep the call short, and try to avoid too many questions. Instead, focus on making it fun and upbeat. If the person seems engaged, ask them about what's around them in the moment: what they see outside their window, or what's that red thing on their bed.



18. Zoom, Skype, and FaceTime have the advantage of providing visuals, but even those should be limited. Unless the person seems OK with multiple people on the call, try to limit it to one – and even if there are others, try to keep just one on the screen at a time. Depending on the stage of dementia, don't be disappointed if your person becomes confused or agitated by the call. If they continually question "where is she?" and "who are all these people?" it might be

best to try another option.

19. Try putting together a "goodie box" to send to your loved one. Include a few favorite treats, maybe a simple toy or goofy-looking stuffed animal, some toilet articles, a pair of silly socks or fun-print mask, and something familiar. Be sure to include a note (remember – upbeat!) from you along with a photo. If they are in a facility, ask the staff for guidance on what they suggest and what restrictions they may have for things coming in from the outside.

20. Be aware that many persons with dementia may not remember or understand what all this pandemic situation is about, and could become even more upset if you try to implement too many unfamiliar changes. If your virtual visits aren't working well, you may need to settle for a more old-fashioned method from pre-technology days: greeting cards. Send one every few days. Cards are normal, familiar, and a constant visual reminder to your loved one that everything is OK. Cards may not be interactive, they may not provide you the live experience you'd prefer, but they might resonate better with a person whose brain is more comfortable in the past than in the present.



IDEAS from our CAREGIVERS

One of my friends, who now has dementia, has had to move to a long-term care facility and is very unhappy about it. She is angry with her daughter, and is often angry with me when I call her. So I contacted several of our former colleagues and asked that they send her a card with a message about something they remember from working with her: how well she did her job, something in particular that she accomplished, etc. Several of them did so. The next time I called her, she was a different person! She was thrilled at having heard from them and that they remembered working with her, and told me, "I'm going to try to be at the next meeting!"

The staff told me that she reads the cards over and over. Now when I call her all I have to do is ask her about her old job and she perks right up. She tells me the same things each time, but I'm fine with that. Rather than being focused on all that's going wrong in her life, she's now able to talk about something that makes her happy. This simple

gesture has made a world of difference in her wellbeing.



How to Hug in the Age of COVID



"Social Distancing" is something we've all become experts at, although six months ago none of us had even heard of it. One of the many things we've discovered about keeping ourselves apart from others is that we miss touch – specifically, hugs. CBS News Sunday morning addresses this most basic human need and offers us a tutorial on how we might bring hugging back into our socially-distant lives:

<https://www.cbs.com/shows/cbs-sunday->

[morning/video/twhtUEPGbt9n_0KNukGued5y_E9FzOd9/getting-back-to-hugging/](https://www.cbs.com/shows/cbs-sunday-morning/video/twhtUEPGbt9n_0KNukGued5y_E9FzOd9/getting-back-to-hugging/)

Notable Quotable



"A good laugh heals a lot of hurts."

- Madeleine l'Engle



Upcoming Events



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

[Click here](#) for more information or to register.

WHEN:
Wednesday, September 23, 2020
8:30am -3:00pm

WHERE:
Online Attendance Only

*** In response to COVID-19 and due to restrictions in place, this event will be available for online attendance only. ***

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.



Ongoing Programs
Open to the Public

MEMORYCAREGIVERS NETWORK

Peer Support & Education Groups

To minimize risk of COVID 19 exposure, all MemoryCaregiver Network support groups will be held on schedule (Tuesdays at 1pm) via Zoom. All current Network participants will receive a link via email to attend the Zoom meetings. If you are not currently attending a MemoryCaregivers support group, please email network@memorycare.org to receive an email invitation to join us. If you do not use email but would like to talk with a support facilitator, please call Mary Donnelly at 828.230.4143.

FLETCHER

First Tuesdays
1:00-3:00 pm
Fletcher 7th Day
Adventist Church
Howard Gap Road and Naples
Road, Fletcher, NC
(just past Park Ridge Hospital)

NEW HOPE

Third Tuesdays
1:00-3:00 pm
New Hope
Presbyterian Church
3070 Sweeten Creek Road,
Asheville, NC 28803
(across from Givens Estates)

NORTH ASHEVILLE

Fourth Tuesdays
1:00-3:00 pm
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

Fall Caregiver College Dates

October 15 to November 19, 2020
Thursdays
2-5:00 pm

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.

The Fall course will be provided as a **live-broadcast for online attendance only**. The ability to access Zoom through a computer, tablet or smartphone with a reliable internet connection is necessary to attend. *If you are unable to attend virtually, please contact us to be placed on a communications list for the next in-person attendance opportunity.*

Related course materials will be provided via email. For a physical copy of the materials, you may reserve a binder for pick-up at our office for \$20 or we can mail one to you for an additional \$10 with request for mailing required by July 1st.

IMPORTANT: In an effort to evaluate course effectiveness, attendees will be expected to complete a 3-part participation survey: one prior to, one immediately post, and a final several months after the course.

Registration is required. Please call our office at 828-771-2219 to register.

MemoryCare Educational Events

Join us to learn more about caring for your loved one and yourself! Courses are free and open to the public and will be presented as a live online broadcast from **2-3:30 pm** on the below dates. **Registration is required** for each course.

To register visit: www.memorycare.org/fall-2020-edu/ or click on the corresponding course date below. *After registration, you will be emailed instructions from Zoom on how to attend the event.*

Contact our office at 828-771-2219 or office@memorycare.org with questions.

August 20

"Elder Fraud Wars"

Employing actual cases from North Carolina, a former Deputy Attorney General will explore the multi-billion-dollar elder fraud industry.

September 10

"Understanding Lewy Body Disease"

A discussion on Lewy Body Disease and caring for a loved one who has been diagnosed.

September 17

"Assistive Technology: Easing your Caregiver Journey"

A discussion on Assistive Technology—how it can help make your life as a caregiver easier.

David Kirkman, Author of Elder
Fraud Wars: Case Histories from
an Enforcement Attorney

Dr. Meg Word-Sims, MemoryCare
Staff Physician

Emily Danciu Grosso,
SimplyHome Sales and Marketing
Director

September 23

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

(8:30a - 3:00p)

*This conference will help
caregivers better understand
behaviors of those with dementia
and effective strategies for
communication and
engagement. (see more details
at the beginning of this section)*

[Click here](#) to register

October 1

BookClub

Reading selection TBA

Speaker TBA

Speaker TBA

October 8

"Lifestyle Choices that May Lower Your Risk for Dementia"

*A discussion on the latest
research on lifestyle choices
including physical activity,
diet, cognitive engagement,
and other healthy habits can
impact one's risk for
dementia.*

Dr. Stelley Gutman, MemoryCare
Staff Physician

Upcoming Community Events

*These events are not sponsored by MemoryCare
and are provided to you as a courtesy.*



MemoryCare is partnering with MAHEC, forming a team to participate in WNC Bridge Foundation's **2020 Drums & Dragons** event which has been re-scheduled for October 3rd (*stay tuned due to the possibility of further rescheduling in response to COVID-19*).

[Click here](#) for more information.

- **Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Care Seminar**
 - August 31, 2020
 - [Click here](#) for more details and registration
- **2020 Parkinson's Disease Conference - Living Well with Parkinson's**
 - September 25, 2020 (rescheduled from April 24)
 - Dr. Della Simon, MemoryCare Physician, will be presenting.
 - [Click here](#) for more details and registration



Do you need a program for a group event?

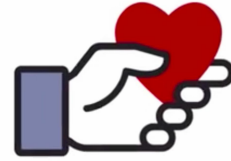
The MemoryCaregivers Network staff presents on a variety of subjects, including Recognizing Early Warning Signs of Memory Loss, Facts and Fiction about Dementia, Better Communication Techniques, and more.

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

Contact Mary Donnelly at network@memorycare.org

Facebook Fundraising for MemoryCare

Encourage donations to MemoryCare while also increasing visibility into MemoryCare's work and mission to your Facebook Friends by inviting them to support your fundraiser. They will then learn more about MemoryCare, the reasons why you are supporting us, and hopefully in return, donate to our mission on your behalf.



Facebook makes raising funds easy and secure. You can set donation goals, track your progress towards your goal, and donors can enter their information securely and easily. With Facebook Fundraisers, you can celebrate your birthday, anniversary, or for no other reason than to support care for families affected by dementia in only a few clicks!

Click below to get started on your own Facebook Fundraiser today.

[Create a Facebook Fundraiser](#)

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 compiled by Mary Donnelly.
Contact network@memorycare.org for more information.

[Subscribe to Caregiver Network News](#)



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!

[Donate Now](#)

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