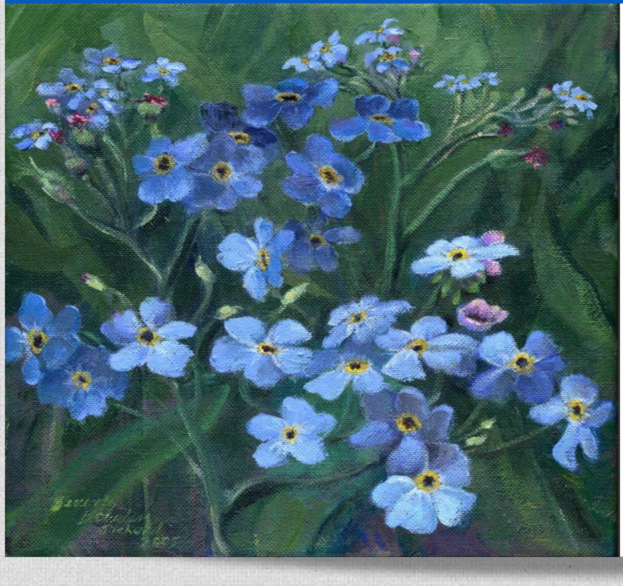
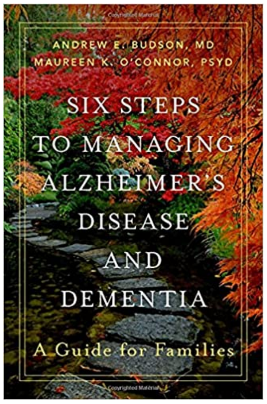
March - April 2022 Volume 13, Issue 2



Caregiver Network News

A newsletter for caregivers of loved ones with dementia

Six Steps to Managing Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia



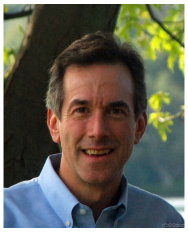
ANDREW E. BUDSON, MD
MAUREEN K. O'CONNOR, PSYD
SIX STEPS TO MANAGING ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE AND DEMENTIA
A Guide for Families

June 23, 2022 | 2:00 - 3:30 pm

Online event via Zoom

Based on his award-winning Book, "Six Steps to Managing Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia," join us for a presentation with Dr. Andrew Budson to learn how you can manage all the problems that come with dementia—including those with memory, language, vision, depression, behavior, agitation, aggression, sleep, falls, incontinence, and more—and still take care of themselves, in six simple steps.

Dr. Andrew Budson is Chief of Cognitive & Behavioral Neurology at the Veterans Affairs Boston Healthcare System, Director of Education at the Boston University Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, and Professor of Neurology at Boston University and Lecturer in Neurology at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Budson also co-authored several other dementia-related books including "Seven Steps to Managing Your Memory: What's Normal, What's Not, and What to Do About It"



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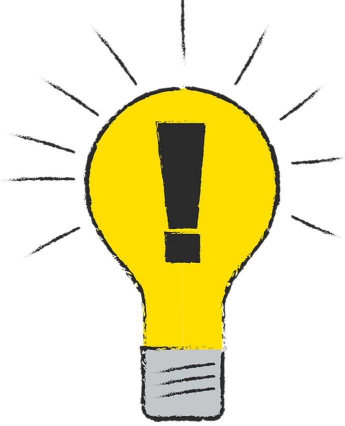
The Trouble with Logical Solutions

As a caregiver, you've probably come across plenty of articles containing "helpful tips" to care for a person with dementia – everything from communication to bathing to home safety and beyond. On the surface, most of them are, indeed, helpful. For others, however, you might need to think through them a bit more...and consider how well they will work for a person who is living with a changing brain.

People with dementia – even those in very early stages – may be experiencing not only forgetfulness and memory



loss, but a host of other challenges that aren't as obvious, even to those who know them well. Perhaps the most significant is how dementia changes the way their brains process information – simply put, it changes how they actually *think*.

Most of us think fairly logically: our brains take in information, use what's already there, and come up with a reasonable, rational, and logical answer. We started learning this skill as children and have lived our lives doing it over and over without ever thinking about it. And not only do we depend on our own thinking skills, we depend on others being logical as well, so that we are all speaking the same language: that of logical thought.

But then dementia shows up, and our loved one who appears the same most of the time starts saying or doing some unusual things. We're usually surprised – but why is that? If a person has dementia, their brain isn't thinking the way it used to…so wouldn't it follow that they'd start doing some strange things? Should we be surprised when this happens? After all, if your brain wasn't thinking clearly, mightn't you be doing some of the same things?

As caregivers, we have the ability to adjust how WE think – to try and see things from the perspective of a person who isn't thinking clearly all the time. We can start by looking at a few of these "helpful tips" and thinking through how we might modify them to better help and support the people in our care.

Tip #1: Help the person write down to-do lists, appointments, and events in a notebook or calendar.

If the patient living with dementia is already accustomed to doing this, they will likely continue for a while. But they may begin to lose the ability to keep up with what day it is – so that even if an event is on the calendar, they may not always be able to determine when it will actually occur…so will ask about it over and over. You may see them write down an event in several places, using calendars, sticky notes, and notepads in an effort to keep up with it, but because keeping up with details is a casualty of most dementias, trying to maintain all this information will eventually become too much for them to manage. It seldom helps to tell them when an event is to occur because they typically won't be able to remember the details of what you've told them, and so whenever they see the event written down, they will probably ask you about it…again and again.

What can you do instead? If the person still wants to utilize a calendar, make sure the entries are simple, accurate, and easy to read. If they have additional notes other places in the house, don't scold them or remove the notes. This is their coping strategy for now and might help them feel less anxious about forgetting something. But even with the notes, be prepared to field questions regularly about when something is going to happen. Rather than continuing to give them details of time and place, then being frustrated when they don't remember, try answering with fewer specifics: "Yes, that's coming up in a few days/weeks. I promise I won't let you forget!" And be sure you have the same events noted on YOUR calendar as a backup.

Tip #2: Help the person organize their medications with a weekly pillbox or medication dispenser.

Even if you are the person who fills the boxes each week, the fallacy in using this system is similar to the calendar: as the person starts losing the concepts of time and space, they can get their days of the week confused. It's not unusual for a person to take more or less pills than prescribed simply because they're not sure what day it is. It seldom helps to call and remind them, as you can't be sure they are able to follow through. And a person with dementia may easily become confused by "S-M-T-W-Th-F-S" as opposed to the words. Finally, understand that unless the person has been using this system for many years, introducing it to them after the dementia has begun is asking them to learn something new, which for most people with dementia is difficult to do. It may seem a simple solution to you, but remember, you're thinking logically.

What can you do instead? If the person has been using this system for some time and appears to be using it successfully, you can keep it place for the present as long as you are supervising its use closely. Check it regularly (every day if possible) and be aware of comments like "I don't think those pills I take are right" or "Oh, I'll take them later." Also be aware if they are on track with how to fill it correctly - this will give you a window into when they need more assistance. Be sure you know where the pill bottles are kept and how much medication is in them. Know that you will eventually need to take over all medications, even if the person insists they don't need or want you to do so. The pillbox system can be a "canary in the mine" to help you know when that time is coming.

Tip #3: Set up online bill paying to consolidate bills in one place.

Similar to the pillbox solution, this idea seems good on its face, but consider two things: first, if the person isn't already using online banking, asking them to learn a new system is zeroing in on something their brain is already having difficulty doing: learning new things. And second, even though the person may be comfortable using a computer now, chances are that will be a skill that is lost early on. Typically the person will lose abilities that are more recent (think computers, cell phones, Alexa, microwaves, etc.). You may have already observed that your loved one is using their devices less often, or only for one or two things like games or reading. Asking them to change not only to a different system for bill-paying but to an unfamiliar one is setting them up to fail.

What can you do instead? Allow the person to continue paying bills the way they've been doing, which is probably writing and mailing checks. It may seem easier to you to do it online, but it probably isn't easier for them. However, do not assume that they don't need help just because they're using a familiar system. Start a new routine that involves you, or someone you trust, being involved in the process. Take a discreet glance at the checkbook, looking for anything that may signify change: accuracy, markouts, unusual notes, etc. Tell Mom you feel that you should know what to do in case anything happens, and would she show you how she pays bills? Let her do as much of the process as she can, but observe if she's having any difficulty writing checks, filing the receipt, or mailing the payment.

If the accounts are already online, be sure you know how to access them, and do it regularly and discreetly. Know that this is an area that will require more and more assistance as the dementia progresses. Many families have experienced distressing wakeup calls with their loved one's finances, so it's better to identify small issues now than wait for a $10,000 mistake to surface.

Your loved one's brain is changing even though they may appear to be pretty much the same on the outside. In most cases they don't realize it's going on, so they may not realize that they need help. You can support them best by remembering that they're not always thinking logically – so beware of looking for logical solutions.

(Watch for more tips in future issues of CNN)

Creative Caregiving

My husband wanders around the house and doesn't seem to know what to do with himself. I've tried getting him to work on puzzles or even watch a TV program, but he isn't interested. However, he had a birthday recently and I've noticed that he's been going through the cards he received – he does it several times a day. I found a few old holiday cards that I'd kept, and he seems to enjoy them too. So I'm asking friends and family to send him cards whenever they can. Postcards work too. It helps if his name is on them, he likes to read his name! I keep them in a basket on the coffee table where he can see them whenever he walks past, and he really seems to enjoy them. He'll often ask me who the people are who signed them (sometimes he recognizes the names and sometimes not) and it gives us a chance to connect for a few minutes.

A special thanks to the sponsors of this newsletter:

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Programs and Events

MemoryCaregivers Network

Peer Support & Education Groups

All MemoryCaregivers Network Support Groups are currently being held online every 1st, 3rd, and 4th Tuesday from 1:00-3:00pm.

Network meetings are open to the public. Participants will receive a link via email the day before each meeting.

If you are not currently attending a MemoryCaregivers support group, please email network@memorycare.org to join the mailing list. If you do not use email but would like to talk with a support facilitator, please call Mary Donnelly at 828.230.4143.

For more information about the MemoryCaregivers Network, contact:

Mary Donnelly	**Pat Hilgendorf**
828.230.4143	828.301.0740
network@memorycare.org	patricia.hilgendorf@gmail.com

Mary and Pat are available on the 2nd Tuesday of every month as well.
Contact Mary for additional information if interested in participating.

The Network relies on charitable support to keep its program going .

Donate Now

Caregiver College

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 is led by MemoryCare staff members with guest lecture by attorney Caroline Knox, Esq.

2022 Course Schedule

Thursdays from 2:00-5:00 pm

Spring	Summer	Fall
April 21 to May 26	**July 7 to Aug 11**	**Oct 13 to Nov 17**
Register for Spring	Register for Summer	Register for Fall

Until further notice, Caregiver College 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.**

Call 828-771-2219 or email education@memorycare.org with questions.

Educational Series

Starting on June 2, 2022, MemoryCare will be providing an educational series designed for caregivers to learn more about how to care for themselves and their loved one affected by dementia. Courses are free, open to the public, and will be presented as a live online broadcast. See the corresponding course below to register. Contact our office at 828-771-2219 or education@memorycare.org with any questions.

Lifestyle Choices that May Lower Your Risk for Dementia

June 2, 2-3:30 pm

presented by Stelley Gutman, MD
MemoryCare Staff Physician

Can your risk for Alzheimer's and other dementias be lowered? What foods are best for our brains? What effect does exercise have on brain function? What about the importance of sleep and social connection? Come join us for a presentation and discussion of why healthy lifestyle behaviors are critical for optimal brain function.

Register

Assistive Technology: Easing your Caregiver Journey

June 16, 2-3:30 pm

presented by Emily Danciu Grosso,
SimplyHome

A discussion on how and which technology can

Let's Talk Caregiver Resources

June 9, 2-3:30 pm

presented by Lindsey Kremer, MSW
& Carly Woods, BSW,
MemoryCare Care Managers

Whether you're a Caregiver College graduate or are new to caregiving, we invite you to join us as we review and discuss the many resources provided in MemoryCare's Caregiver College sessions. We'll highlight the usefulness of these resources and how they can be applied to unique caregiving challenges.

Register

Six Steps to Managing Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia

June 23, 2-3:30 pm

presented by Neurologist and Author,
Andrew Budson, MD

help make your life as a caregiver easier.

Based on his award winning book, a discussion on better ways of communicating and managing the care needs of those living with dementia or Alzheimer's Disease.

Register

Register

Move for Memory

Now EXTENDED into 2022!!!

(if you were previously registered for the 2021 courses ending December 16, you will need to re-register for the new 2022 course dates which began on January 10)

Join us for MemoryCare's Adult Exercise Program, led by Dr. Tiffany Salido! **Classes are free and open to the public and will be provided weekly through Zoom for online attendance** (choose which day(s) of the week to attend below).

"Whether sitting or standing, my wife and I get exercise, have fun, sing along and drink our water. Tiffany is a Godsend!" - Move for Memory Participant

This class is intended for people with memory impairment to participate *with* their caregiver in fun and simple exercises. The exercises incorporate movements that can improve daily activities and general mobility. Group exercise will be approximately 40 minutes, followed by a time to answer questions. Exercises can be performed standing or seated.

Please note you will be required read and acknowledge a disclaimer when registering to join. *The ability to access Zoom through a computer, tablet or smartphone with a reliable internet connection is necessary to attend.* Email **education@memorycare.org** or call 828-771-2219 with questions.

2022 Registration

Mondays

9:30 - 10:30 am
January 10 through May 23

Register for Mondays

Wednesdays

9:30 - 10:30 am
January 12 through May 25

Register for Wednesdays

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

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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.

We rely on charitable donations to continue these programs!

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