



Caregiver Network News

*A newsletter for caregivers
of loved ones with dementia*

Spring Education 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.

June 2, 2-3:30 pm: Lifestyle Choices that May Lower Your Risk for Dementia

June 9, 2-3:30 pm: Let's Talk Caregiver Resources

June 16, 2-3:30 pm: Assistive Technology: Easing your Caregiver Journey

June 23, 2-3:30 pm: Six Steps to Managing Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia

Visit www.memorycare.org/spring-2022 to learn more and to register.

THE BIG 3



Caring for a person with dementia, day in and day out, is an emotional roller-coaster. In the early days you might experience shock and uncertainty, along with some sadness and fear, with probably a little denial thrown in. As the journey continues, you may run the gamut from "this isn't so bad" to "OMG, how will I manage this?" At some point, though, even the most optimistic and upbeat caregivers will find themselves tackling some

emotional heavy-hitters: resentment, frustration, anger, helplessness, anxiety...and The Big Three: Loneliness, Guilt, and Grief.

Negative emotions are a reality of caregiving. A lot of you may have a hard time admitting you have them. You may have started out by saying, "Oh, this won't happen to me, I have a handle on this" or "I'm happy to do it because I love the person in my care." But try as we might to keep those negative feelings buried, the toll of daily caregiving will ultimately let them out, especially when you're tired or stressed. And if you don't acknowledge that they are real, if you don't express them and deal with them, they can lead to digestive problems, cardiac/blood pressure problems, sleep problems, weight gain, chronic pain, depression, and even substance abuse. If ignored, these negative feelings can become, in the words of Donna Schempp, LCSW, "like a two-year-old...who keeps tugging at you until you stop and pay attention."

So in the next few issues of CNN, we are going to take a hard look at The Big Three: where they come from, what they look like, and what you might do to help you cope with them a little better. We'll begin with...

Loneliness

Dewey is 78 and cares for his wife of 55 years. "I can get along pretty well during the day, but it's the evenings that are hard. My wife goes to bed right after dinner, and it's just me and the TV for the rest of the night. This is when the loneliness really sets in."

Dewey isn't alone in his struggle. "Statistics shows that between 40-70% of family caregivers experience clinical symptoms of depression, which can often be caused by feelings of isolation and loneliness with the caregiving experience." (*Caregiver Isolation and Loneliness*, www.caregiver.org)



Loss of a relationship is devastating. The experts tell you, confide in a friend. Friends are important, but friendships can't take the place of a partner to share the day with. And what if your best friend is the person you're caring for? "My wife used to be my sounding board for everything from complaining about the weather to contemplating a job change. But now she doesn't seem interested, or she doesn't understand... so I can't talk about what's on my mind any more with my best friend. I miss that."

Loneliness can result not only from loss of a relationship but from loss of social connections as well. Social isolation, as we've learned from the pandemic, isn't good for us...for ANY of us. The problem is that caregivers inadvertently create social isolation for themselves when they stop participating in leisure activities they used to enjoy - then one day they realize that their social life has deteriorated when they weren't looking. For most of us, addressing our own needs typically occupies a much lower priority on the caregiving scale than addressing the myriad of daily tasks that come with the job. This means that caregivers will sacrifice their own health and wellbeing because they feel they must focus on their caregiving duties. What they don't realize is that reinstating those activities and relationships would actually go a long way to help alleviate some of their loneliness issues.

Losing opportunities for socializing is common, but so is losing the closeness of friends. "My friends say they want to help but most of them don't understand what I'm going through." Details about a caregiver's home life can become gloomily repetitive, so many caregivers are reluctant to share what's really going on - which often leads to a formerly close friendship becoming superficial.

Caregivers may also find themselves cut off from friends or family who distance themselves not because they don't care, but because they don't understand. "They act as if they're going to catch it," says a woman who feels left out of her former circle of friends.

All of these - the lack of social interaction with others, the falling-off of friends, the absence of shared pastimes, and the loss of a spousal or close partner relationship - create the perfect recipe for loneliness.

How to Cope:

- 1. Make extra effort to connect with people who are important to you, and ask them to help by doing the same with you.** It's easy to fall out of the habit of seeing people, but by putting it on your to-do list, it's not so hard to get back into it.
- 2. Share your feelings plainly.** If folks don't know what you're dealing with, they're not able to offer support. Some won't anyway - but that's their own issue, and not something you can fix or be responsible for. Let friends know you could use some company

and suggest a time and place. Or set up a virtual book club or cocktail hour when friends gather via Zoom each week. Know that even if they don't completely understand your situation, they still care about you.

3. Share the Care. Utilize respite opportunities, home care, adult day programs, neighbors & friends – anyone and anything that allows you to re-join the world and participate in things that are important to you, that recharge your batteries, and that give you that basic of all human needs: human interaction. And do it regularly.



4. Find a support group. This is where you can connect with the folks who are most likely to understand the difficulties you're facing. "I'm closer to the people in my support group than I am to any of my long-time friends who mean well but who don't have an inkling of what I'm going through." A good support group can provide information, education, laughter, understanding, tips, friendship, and - oh yes - support.

5. Connect via technology. If you find it difficult to leave home, then put yourself out there in cyberspace via Facebook or another media you feel comfortable with. Or be a virtual volunteer. There are any number of groups, organizations, nonprofits, classes, and causes that could use your participation without you having to be present. Attend meetings virtually and offer to do projects that can be accomplished at home. You may not be able to attend the garden club's plant sale, but you can still be involved by sending out flyers or counting up the money.

6. Get a pet. OK, it may be something else to look after, but ask any pet lover: pets can provide a lot of company, they're a great excuse to get you outside, and they will let you complain whenever you need to.

7. Listen to music. Rock 'n' roll, classical, country, jazz....it doesn't matter, so long as it's something upbeat and snappy. Your brain loves music and will release endorphins when it hears it. Endorphins make you feel good. And if the song makes you sing or dance, so much the better.

Being alone, being isolated from those around you, hurts. During your caregiving journey, you may have days when you feel alone, even abandoned. When it happens to you, remember that it's a temporary consequence of your situation. Then go put on your favorite song, play with the dog, and send a chatty email to a friend.

A Caregiver's Poem

Gaps

of course she was no longer the same
as when they wed, neither was he,
their skin and muscle tone withered,

postures slumped, energy diminished,
lines and wrinkles, hair grayed, not as soft --
all gradual metamorphoses,

slow changes barely discerned
through a lifetime together,
mutual aging melding life's stages.

then one day he couldn't help but acknowledge
distinct hesitations in her speech,
first when searching for names

of persons or flowers or places.
he willingly filled in the gaps even as
they occurred more frequently.

she struggled to recall yesterday's conversations,
calendar appointments, restaurants where they'd dined,
places they'd traveled became vague mysteries.

she began to misplace and lose things,
every day more time spent looking for papers,
utensils, accessories she had earlier in the day.

when speaking to her he'd have to repeat himself,
as if his words, however soft or direct,
must first penetrate an armored aura to register.

he hoped she was just not paying attention
or was distracted, then realized attention
was another cognition being lost.

he found himself exhausted thinking for two,
found himself alone in her presence, found himself
ever fearful someday she'd forget who he was.

By Nelson Sartoris

Nelson is active in the OLLI poetry community and his books: Brain Slivers (2016), On Wings of Words (2018), With These Hands (2020), and forthcoming in 2022, Unsent Postcards; all are published by Pisgah Press and available on Amazon.

A special thanks to the sponsors of this newsletter:



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
828.230.4143
network@memorycare.org

Pat Hilgendorf
828.301.0740
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

Summer
July 7 to Aug 11

Register for Summer

Fall
Oct 13 to Nov 17

Register for Fall

Until further notice, Caregiver College will be provided as **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

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

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 help make your life as a caregiver easier.

Register

Six Steps to Managing Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia

June 23, 2-3:30 pm

*presented by Neurologist and Author,
Andrew Budson, MD*

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

Move for Memory

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 June 13

[Register for Mondays](#)

Wednesdays

9:30 - 10:30 am

January 12 through June 15

[Register for Wednesdays](#)

Seeing It From the Inside – What Is It Like to Live with Dementia?



Jun 6, 2022: 1:00-2:30 PM (EST) via Zoom

Jun 8, 2022: 1:00-2:30 PM (EST) via Zoom

"Something is always changing." This presentation will feature Joanna (living with Alzheimer's) and Lynn (living with Fronto-Temporal Dementia) who will speak candidly about the daily challenges they face.

In Part 1 we will focus on Joanna's and Lynn's straightforward, poignant, and often humorous descriptions of how they adapt to living with a changing brain. In Part 2 we will use their expertise and insight, together with our knowledge of brain change, to help us better address the caregiving challenges we may be facing in our own lives. Come prepared with your questions!

To register: https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_K_2u63ARR-yUF2pfPIW_ZQ?timezone_id=America%2FNew_York

*** This is not a MemoryCare event rather is shared here as an opportunity of interest.

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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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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