



**Alzheimer's &
Dementia Services**
of Memphis, Inc.

CareLines

WWW.ADSMEMPHIS.ORG

DECEMBER 2020

ADS ONLINE SUPPORT GROUPS FOR THE MONTH OF DECEMBER

General Support Group

Wednesday, Dec 2, 2:30

Topic: Legal Services (MALS)

General Support Group

Tuesday, Dec 8, 10:30

**Topic: Minimizing Hospital
Visits**

Spousal Support Group

Thursday, Dec 17, 12:30

General Support Group

Tuesday, Dec 29, 4:30

Topic: Eating Issues

**Join meetings from your
computer, tablet or
smartphone.**

[https://global.gotomeeting.com/
join/303620541](https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/303620541)

**You can also dial in using
your phone.**

US: +1 (872) 240-3212

Access Code: 303-620-541

For questions, please call Adina
901-372-4585

or email:

asamberg@adsmemphis.org

*CareLines is partially supported by
the Aging Commission
of the Mid-South.*

Feeling Safe

We all need to feel safe. It is such a basic human need that one might say our survival depends upon it.

A person with dementia is likely to experience the world as an unsafe place for much of the time. We can only imagine how frightening it must be to experience the world in this way. This is why a person with dementia may try to keep as close as possible to people they recognize.

The less anxious and stressed the person with dementia feels, the more likely he is to be able to use his skills to the best advantage. A relaxed, uncritical atmosphere is, therefore, very important.

Too many conflicting sounds or too many people can add to confusion. If possible, turn off the radio or the television, or if the person needs to concentrate on something in particular, take them to a quiet place.

A person with dementia is quite likely to be upset or embarrassed by her declining abilities or clumsiness. She will need plenty of reassurance.

Although you need to be tactful and encouraging, sometimes the best thing when things go wrong is to have a good laugh together.

Adapted from: *Alzheimer's Society Advice Sheet*, January 2000, United Kingdom, www.alzheimers.org.uk

*Laughter builds rapport.
Rapport builds trust.
Trust builds relationships.*

Mantra of Kathy Laurenhue, CEO Wiser Now

Inside this issue:

Activities at ADS	7
ADS Online Support Groups	1
Caregiver Survivor Planner	7
Dementia Caregivers: How to Build Meaningful Relationships in Spite of Memory Loss	2, 3
Feeling Safe	1
Holiday Meal Tips for People with Dietary Restrictions	6
Medicare Open Enrollment	7
Online and Telephone Support Options	5
Strategies for Overcoming Holiday Blues	8
Tips for the Month of December	5
Vision Challenges Due to Age and to Dementia	4
Wishlist	5



Dementia Caregivers: How to Build Meaningful Relationships in Spite of Memory Loss



Being the caregiver for someone you love who is gradually losing mental capacities is about as tough as it gets in human life outside of wars, disasters and profound poverty. Parents who were once your source of nurturing and knowledge; who worked hard to take care of their family; who had interests in politics, religion, sports, movies, celebrities and more; who had fun with their friends; who may have been among the best in their field. Parents who lose their mastery and become unable to manage their own affairs or to care for themselves in the most basic ways -- parents who become dependent on you to take care of these things for them -- can be, and often are, a source of great sadness.

Spouses and lovers who were your soul mates, your partners in life, the people with whom you shared your most important, moving, pleasurable and challenging moments -- spouses who gradually lose their capacity to be with you as companions and confidantes can also be a source of great sadness.

On top of this, the time, energy and resources that it takes to be the primary caregiver for these people who are so important to you, can sap your own strength. You can feel that it is more than you can stand.

What can help?

Changing your expectations of the person with declining cognitive capacities can make a big difference, helping you to be less frustrated and irritated by his or her inability to do what they once could and especially to be with you in the way they once were.

Focusing less on the past and on a wished-for future can make it possible to connect emotionally in a new way and to get the most out of the moments you have together. Our relationships are often oriented toward a collective future: retiring together, traveling together, getting old together. It can be daunting to maintain a relationship that does not have the kind of future we always assumed it would. But it is not impossible to have relationships in the moment that are emotionally satisfying even if we are terribly sad about what they, and we together, have lost.

Understanding that the person we love is still there, despite their inability to access memories without help, can also make a difference. Reminiscing together -- even if it is mostly one-sided -- can be a gratifying experience, especially when the person's eyes light up with recognition. Talking about and engaging in old interests, listening to favorite music, going to a baseball game or even getting the feel of it on TV, watching old movies, taking a walk in the old neighborhood - - all these can be sources of satisfaction in the moment. Even if the explicit memory of these experiences slips away because of the complex ways in which dementia affects the brain, the emotional connections remain.

(continued on page 3)

(continued from page 2)

Discovering the possibility of being together in silence can be deeply moving and meaningful as well. When we put aside our dashed dreams long enough to be open to the rich emotions alive in that silence, just being together can release an unspoken emotional exchange.

But what about the really difficult times? Dad has wandered away again. Is he safe? Mom says she doesn't recognize you and yells for the police when you visit. Your wife curses you for cheating on her. Your husband demands sex with the home health aide. Your friend seems lost in himself and does not respond to your presence at all. What can you do?

There is no magic wand guaranteed to make bad times go away. Even if by changing our own behavior we reduce their anxiety and agitation, sometimes the people we care about remain disengaged. Some people's disappointments and angers run so deep that moments of peaceful, loving exchange seem impossible. Some of us who are caregivers can't stand another minute.

But these terrible times do not beset all people all the time, not by a long shot. It may seem impossible for the person you care about to get meaningful satisfaction out of a life so different from the life she or he lived before cognitive decline. It may seem impossible to have a meaningful and satisfying relationship with a parent, a spouse, a partner or a friend with whom you can no longer have in-depth conversations. It may seem that they cannot possibly find life worth living.

But a great many can. People with significant cognitive limits can get satisfaction out of life, and it is possible for us to have meaningful relationships with them -- if we learn to shift what we want and expect from them, see the person who is still inside, and develop the capacity to live in the emotional moment.

Sanders, S and Swails, P. "A Quest for Meaning: Hospice Social Workers and patients with End-Stage Dementia" in Social Work Vol 56, Number 2, April 2011. This article is co-authored with John Zeisel, Ph.D., who is Founder and President of [The I'm Still Here Foundation](#) and [Hearthstone Alzheimer Care](#).



“By creating and embracing joyful moments, people are able to find peace and live with purpose.” Lori La Bey, founder of Alzheimer’s Speaks





Vision Challenges Due to Age and to Dementia



As we age nearly everyone is affected by the following changes in vision:

- 👁️ A diminished ability to adjust to changes in light. Going from bright sunlight to an indoor space tends to be especially difficult.
- 👁️ An increased sensitivity to glare.
- 👁️ Aging eyes need much more overall light to see clearly.

Vision disorders in older adults may include: cataracts, glaucoma, macular degeneration and diabetic retinopathy, to name a few.

In the early stages of dementia, people may be able to describe their vision problems, but people in the mid and late stages of dementia have frequently lost that ability. Not all conditions can be treated effectively, and certainly some of the tests and treatments are likely to be frightening and upsetting to the person with Alzheimer's disease. Each caregiver must make his own decisions related to what is best for his loved one, but particularly when a person is in the early stage of dementia, make sure a qualified ophthalmologist gives your loved one a thorough eye exam.

People who have dementia as a result of a stroke may experience blurred vision, double vision or loss of vision and they may find their world more confusing as a result.

Dr. Peter N. Rosen, a retired ophthalmologist wrote that people with Alzheimer's disease have several well-defined deficits:

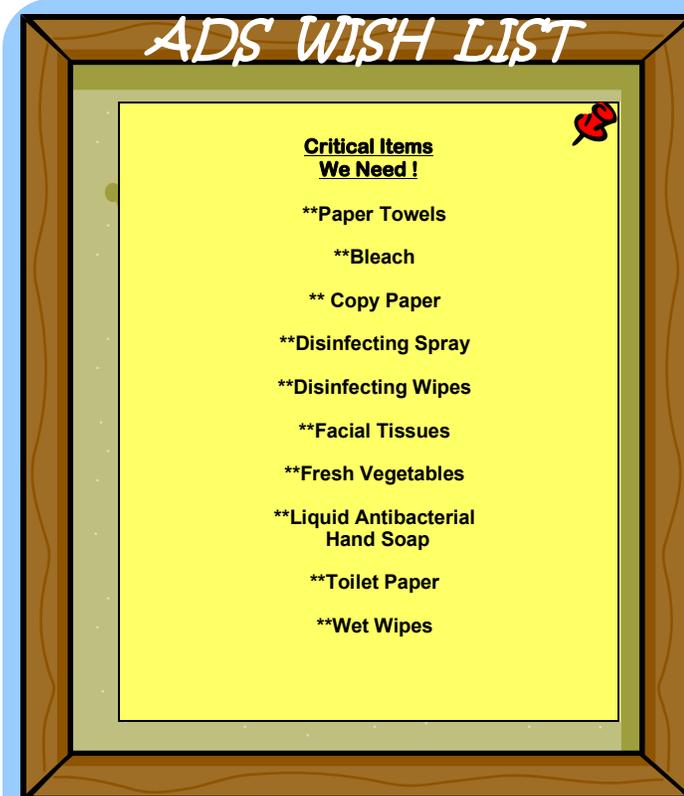
- 👁️ Contrast sensitivity (which affects face recognition)
- 👁️ Visual processing speed
- 👁️ Selective and divided visual attention, which is the ability to pay attention to more than one thing at once – which is necessary for driving, and the ability to ignore what isn't relevant at any given moment.

We also know that people with AD have difficulty distinguishing objects from their backgrounds so that they all tend to blend together – mashed potatoes on a white plate on a white tablecloth might as well be invisible. Similarly, a man might not see the white toilet in the white tiled bathroom.

Caregivers can often make necessary adaptations when they have an awareness of some of these deficits affecting their loved ones suffering from dementia.



Adapted from Wiser Now, Inc. @ 2009, Vol 10 Issue 3 www.wisernow.com



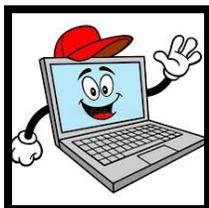
Tips for the Month of December

- * If you send greeting cards, your loved one may enjoy helping. Depending on his level of ability and his attention span, he may be able to help sign cards, address them, put them in envelopes, seal the envelopes and affix the stamps.
- * When you receive cards, read them together then display them. The names of old friends may trigger memories and inspire pleasant conversations.
- * Pants and trousers with drawstring waists are very comfortable and allow for changes in weight.
- * Put your loved one's ID bracelet on the wrist of his dominant hand. It will be more difficult for him to remove.
- * If your loved one starts a project and doesn't finish it, don't make a big deal out of it. If he gets upset with himself, try to distract him with something pleasant. Go back and quietly finish the project yourself when it's convenient for you.
- * If you can, involve your loved one in gift selections. She may be interested in making small choices between two items or in choosing gift wrapping. When she receives gifts, help her unwrap them if she needs help. Explain the gifts and demonstrate how to use them.
- * Your loved one may experience a decrease or loss in her sense of smell. She might not be able to tell if food has spoiled. Don't keep leftovers in the refrigerator too long!
- * People can get restless for any number of reasons. You may not be able to determine why your loved one is restless, but you might be able to provide her with a comforting distraction by taking her for a walk or car ride.
- * Don't skip your AD support group meetings or your primary source of support during the holidays. It's a gift you must give yourself.

Online and Telephone Support Options for Caregivers.

For virtual community events and support:

- ◆ See front page for info about ADS online Support Groups
- ◆ Call 901-372-4585 to talk to an ADS Social Worker on the phone
- ◆ alzfdn.org
- ◆ alztennessee.org
or call 24/7 Helpline: 800-259-4283



Adapted from: Lyn Roche, *Coping with Caring*, Elder Books, 1996.

Holiday Meal Tips for People With Dietary Restrictions



Food—it's one of the most exciting parts of the holiday season.

Unfortunately, some of the season's most delectable delights can cause problems for people with chronic health concerns affected by diet, such as diabetes, arthritis and irritable bowel syndrome.

Katherine Downes, a dietician for the Visiting Nurse Service of New York, says that people with dietary restrictions shouldn't have to sacrifice taste for safety—especially during the holidays. She offers her advice for keeping feasts flavorful when dealing with diet-sensitive health issues.

Arthritis: There are countless cuisines rumored to be beneficial for people suffering from arthritis pain, but Downes suggests focusing on foods high in omega-3 fatty acids (for reducing inflammation), as well as vitamin D and calcium, which—when taken together—may enhance cartilage function. To cover all three bases in one meal, she suggests noshing on baked salmon marinated in a cranberry glaze sauce and adding a side dish of broccoli sprinkled with low-fat cheese.

Diabetes: If you have diabetes, overindulgence is a no-no, says Downes. To prevent dangerous, energy-draining fluctuations in blood sugar, eat regular snacks throughout the day. Make sure you maintain the recommended diabetes diet by sticking to healthy carbohydrates: vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes. For a sweet dish that won't spike your sugar levels, try cinnamon-spiced quinoa with baked butternut squash and almonds.

High Blood Pressure: Keeping high blood pressure at bay is all about keeping your sodium intake to a minimum—a daunting task during holiday meals filled with salty soups and brined birds. Your goal should be to keep your daily sodium intake at or below 2,300 milligrams, according to Downes. Slashing salt from your diet doesn't mean you have to resign yourself to a tasteless turkey. You can still flavor your festive fowl with herbs, spices and salt-free seasonings. You can indulge in foods that reduce blood pressure, including: sweet potatoes, squash, kale, carrots and green beans.

Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS): There is one guest that is never welcome at a holiday gathering: gas. For the good of everyone at the table, IBS sufferers should double-check side dishes and stray away from traditional gas-producers, such as broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage and beans. For keeping diarrhea and constipation in check, Downes advises sticking to small portions of sugary, caffeinated or alcoholic food and beverages, while opting instead for whole grains, fruits, vegetables and other sources of fiber.

Acid Reflux: If you suffer from acid reflux, moderation is the key to having a merry meal. This principle applies to both food and alcoholic drinks—overindulging in either can lead to holiday heartburn. Keeping nausea at bay also means shying away from some perennial favorites such as peppermint lattes and chocolate bark. Along with citrus, mint and chocolate are notorious instigators of acid reflux. Resist the urge to lie down after a big meal. Instead, gather up your loved ones and go for a walk to help your food digest.

Adapted from article by Anne-Marie Botek; agingcare.com

Activities at ADS



We are looking forward to holiday activities and celebrations in December!

Holiday Celebrations Music by Creative Aging

Friday, December 18

Dorothy's Place: Entertainment by Joyce Cobb

Kennedy Park: Entertainment by Kenneth Jackson



Caregiver Survival Planner



Establish realistic expectations for yourself and for those around you:

- Be **AWARE** that many things about this situation are out of your control.
- **ACCEPT** that you may not always be able to care for your loved one the way you wish you could.
- Take **ACTION** when you can control a situation.

I understand that having the right tools and equipment will enable my loved one to maintain some independence. It will also help protect me from unneeded physical strain. I will look at our surroundings with fresh eyes and observe the areas where we seem to have the most difficulty. I will visit a medical supply store and ask for suggestions. I will find out how things such as shower transfers, hand rails, lifts and other equipment can make our lives easier, and I will ask for guidance on getting financial assistance through Medicare, Medicaid, or community programs.

Adapted from Caregiver's Survival Training & Journal by Elaine K. Sanchez, © 2010.

Elaine K Sanchez is an author/speaker who is passionate about helping others cope with the emotional stress of caregiving. For more information visit her websites at www.ElaineKSanchez.com, and www.CaregiverHelp.com.

Medicare Open Enrollment Oct. 15th - Dec. 7th

Medicare beneficiaries can sign up, or make changes to their plans.
For more information please contact the Aging Commission of the Mid South **222-4100**,
or go to www.medicare.gov/find-a-plan.

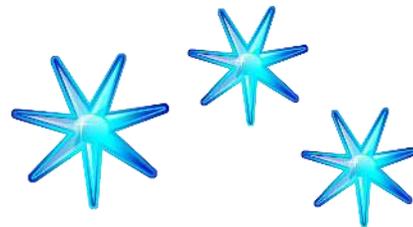
Strategies for Overcoming Holiday Blues

Sometimes as we age, we don't feel like having lots of parties anymore, and the holidays are no longer very jolly. What used to be a time of joy can change, as life throws us some curve balls. We think we're supposed to be especially happy this time of year. That expectation itself can cause people of all ages to become sad or depressed, but older adults are especially susceptible. As the caregiver of an elderly person, you can be prone to assuming your loved one's feelings of sadness or anxiety.

One of the biggest challenges for your elderly loved one and yourself is losing a family member. Loss often brings intense feelings of grief, loneliness and emptiness. Just as frustrating, you may feel guilty if you find yourself having a good time, even for a short period. While the holidays may not be the same as they were in the past, there can still be plenty of reasons to celebrate. One of the most important things to remember is that it's okay to enjoy the holidays as they are now. Memories hold a special place in your heart, but the heart has enough room to add new memories.

To help you through those tough times, talk over how you would like to handle the situation with someone you trust. That person can let others know your wishes. If you want to do something to honor your loved one publicly, there are different ways you can pay tribute. Choose something that is right for you. Among them are:

- * Placing the person's picture in a place of prominence
- * Lighting a memorial candle
- * Making a photo album of previous holidays to focus on positive memories
- * Setting aside a time so that everyone who wants to can share a memory or a funny story about the deceased
- * Toasting your loved one
- * Going to church or synagogue
- * Volunteering to help those in need



Remember that not everyone grieves in the same way.

Some people may grieve for weeks and others for years. Understand that the holidays won't be the same as they used to be, but that the "new normal" can be fulfilling in a different way.

Generally, what can help is not being too hard on yourself for the difficulty you may be experiencing. Be honest and recognize that the holiday may not be the same without your family member or friend. Talk with people you trust about your feelings. You can also find a support group, where you can discuss your thoughts with people who have gone through the same thing. You can often find groups by going through your church, synagogue, or senior citizen organizations. Remember the real meaning of the holidays is to be thankful for your memories, for what you have now and for what the future will bring.

Adapted from article by Veronica Poklemba agingcare.com, 12/15/10.