



# Alzheimer's Awareness Family Night

## HANDOUTS AND RESOURCES

### **SESSION #8:**

### **Having Good Visits**



## Handout #1: Opening Exercise

One of the powerful aspects of the human brain is its ability to compensate for missing or skewed information. Read the following:

I cdnuolt blveiee taht I cluod aulacly uesdnatnrd waht I was rdanieg. The phaonmneal pweor of the human mind! Aoccdrnig to rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mttar in waht oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoatnt thing is taht the frist and lsat ltteer be in the rghit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it wouthit a porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Amzanig, huh?

Sometimes what's missing doesn't matter as much as we think.

Session #8: Having Good Visits

## Handout #2: No-Pressure Quiz

- 1. Families often have difficulty knowing how to visit with their loved one in a residential care setting for all of the following reasons EXCEPT:**
  - a. In the past, they had household chores to do when they visited their loved one at home.
  - b. They have a tendency to ask questions that their loved one can't answer due to short-term memory loss.
  - c. They don't really want to spend time with their loved one
  - d. Some family members think it is helpful to test their loved one by asking questions related to names and dates.
  - e. They haven't had much practice in adapting activities, such as games, to help their loved one feel successful.
  
- 2. Some family members feel awkward about starting a conversation with their loved ones with Alzheimer's disease. All of the following are likely to be positive ways to begin a conversation EXCEPT:**
  - a. Pay the person a compliment.
  - b. Reminisce about a picture on her bedside table.
  - c. Share pictures of the person's grandchildren or great-grandchildren.
  - d. Ask her if she has heard the latest news about the terrorist bombing.
  - e. Talk about the delicious smell of coffee, and offer her a cup.
  
- 3. Some families are more comfortable visiting their loved one if they can participate in a group activity. Which of the following is an appropriate example of this?**
  - a. Accompanying their loved one on a group outing
  - b. Playing the piano for a sing-along
  - c. Assisting the leader with a craft project
  - d. All of the above
  - e. A and B only
  
- 4. All of the following are likely to be appropriate one-on-one activities a family member can do with their loved one when they visit EXCEPT:**
  - a. Going for a drive
  - b. Playing Bridge
  - c. Taking a walk
  - d. Sitting quietly on the porch, rocking and holding hands
  - e. Reading aloud the poems of Emily Dickinson

**5. Singing is a good substitute for conversation for all of the following reasons EXCEPT:**

- a. Like a smile, it's a universal means of communication.
- b. It's a way of lifting a person's mood.
- c. It's a way of calming and soothing a person.
- d. It's flattering to be sung to – it implies we value that person.
- e. All are valid.

**6. Which of the following is NOT a good idea for how family members can end a visit smoothly?**

- a. Leave behind a reminder of themselves, such as a hand-written note or a sweater
- b. Suggest they must leave now to take care of an emergency at home
- c. Time their leave-taking to coincide with the beginning of an activity their loved one enjoys.
- d. Create a good-bye ritual such as always singing, "So Long, Farewell" from the *Sound of Music*.
- e. All are valid.

### Handout #3: A Matching Quiz of 50s TV Comedies

Here is a little matching game from comedy shows of the 1950s. Can you match the show from the left column with the adult male star of each show from the right column?

- |  |                                     |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| 1. The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet | a. Hugh Beaumont                    |
| 2. The Donna Reed Show                 | b. William Bendix                   |
| 3. Father Knows Best                   | c. Carl Betz                        |
| 4. Leave It to Beaver                  | d. Wally Cox                        |
| 5. The Life of Riley                   | e. Bob Cummings                     |
| 6. Love That Bob                       | f. Ozzie Nelson (this is a freebie) |
| 7. Make Room for Daddy                 | g. Phil Silvers                     |
| 8. Mr. Peepers                         | h. Danny Thomas                     |
| 9. Sgt. Bilko                          | i. Desi Arnez                       |
| 10. I Love Lucy                        | j. Robert Young                     |



## Handout #4: Important Points and Resources

### A summary of the discussion

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#### **Families Don't Always Find It Easy to Visit**

- Frequently, families have been used to helping their loved ones with AD (cooking, cleaning, mowing the lawn). They are at a loss for things to do during a visit when their loved one moves to a residential care community.
- They often find it difficult to make conversation with a person whose verbal skills have diminished and who has little short term memory or sense of time and numbers.
- They also find it difficult when their loved one fails to remember their name. It may help families to keep in mind that people with AD who do not remember a loved one's name are still comforted by that person's voice and physical presence. People with AD don't need to know a person's name to appreciate their kindness.

#### **Families Need Ideas for Effective Communication**

Here are a few ideas for fostering good interactions:

- Greet your loved one with a compliment.
- Call attention to something in the room that is likely to conjure up happy memories, such as a favorite photograph.
- Bring in something, such as a lilac branch, that is likely to foster warm memories, even without conversation.
- Rephrase questions so that any answer is acceptable. Not, "What did you do today?" – which puts the person with AD on the spot, but "How was your day?" – which is an opinion question with no wrong answer.
- Use statements that reflect the person's demeanor: "You look happy. You must be having a good day."

#### **Ideas for What to Do**

Here is an abbreviated list of things you may want to try when you visit:

1. Continue your caregiving role in some way, such as assisting with feeding or bathing your loved one.
2. Assist staff with a group activity such as a craft class or by joining in an activity such as a sing-along. Share your talents.
3. Attend a social event at the residential care community – a picnic, ice cream social, bazaar.
4. Join a group outing.
5. Take your loved one on an outing on your own.
6. Get your loved one outdoors as often as possible.

7. Bring in a special snack for your loved one.
8. Bring in a simple project to work on.
9. Bring along reminiscence-enhancers such as an old photo album, trip souvenirs, or a grandchild's outgrown baby clothes. Find a coffee table picture book representing the person's favorite hobby or pastime, and look through it together.
10. Use the indoor and outdoor activity supplies on site. Ask staff for advice about what games and activities your loved one enjoys.
11. Enjoy music together.
  - Try out some rhythm instruments – shake, strum.
  - Dance; even unsteady walkers are often still good dancers.
  - Sing; it brings oxygen to the brain and lifts one's spirits. Words to songs are often more easily remembered than spoken words.
  - Lullabies sung to an older adult with dementia at bedtime can be just as soothing as a lullaby sung to a baby.
  - Anytime a person with dementia is feeling low, start with a slow song ("Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen," or "Let Me Call You Sweetheart") and move gently to something more rousing ("I Whistle a Happy Tune," "When the Saints Go Marchin' In").
  - Don't worry if you're off key; your intent is appreciated.
  - Listen quietly to music together.
12. Bring along grandchildren or pets and watch them play.
13. Read aloud. Reading poetry, funny anecdotes, or inspirational texts aloud takes pressure off the person with AD to make conversation, but still allows him to hear a loved one's voice.
14. Be attuned to the person's need for quiet. Many people with AD need all their powers of concentration to complete a task, such as eating a meal or putting on a sweater. In such cases, conversation can be a confusing distraction that keeps them from completing a task. Silence can be golden.
15. Provide loving touches. Smiles, hugs, hand holding, foot massages, and a comforting arm around a shoulder are comforting gestures. In her book *Another Country*, Mary Pipher notes that, "The need for physical affection never ends."

### **Ask and You Shall Receive**

Ask the receptionist, activity director, or other personnel at your residential care community for:

- Maps and information on local attractions
- A community calendar
- The email of the activity director

### **Create a Good-bye Ritual**

When you leave your loved one, if you want to leave without guilt, create a “good-bye ritual.” Here are some possibilities:

- **Develop a leave-taking routine that suits you.** Perhaps it is holding the person’s hand and singing, “Goodnight My Someone,” kissing her cheek and saying, “Sweet dreams, Sweetie. I love you,” and then walking out the door.
- **Give the person a reason to say goodbye to you.** Time your visit so your departure coincides with the beginning of mealtime or an activity the person especially enjoys.
- **Leave a reminder of yourself to provide tangible comfort until you return** – a photograph, a greeting card with a message for her, a scarf or sweater that she associates with you.

Postpone visits when you are exhausted or stressed.

## A resource list

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Here are resources on visits:

1. *A Different Visit: Activities for Caregivers and Their Loved Ones with Memory Impairments*, was written by Cameron Camp, PhD, director of the Myers Research Institute (MRI) near Cleveland, along with several of his colleagues, (Adena Jotlin is listed as lead author) in 2005. The book is based on activities the MRI staff successfully implemented with people with Alzheimer's disease using Montessori principles, such as working at the level of each individual's ability. It is written for a person who is in about mid-stage AD, but each activity comes with ideas for making it more or less challenging. Order the book, or learn more at <http://www.myersresearch.org> under "products."
2. *Getting to Know the Life Stories of Older Adults: Activities for Building Relationships* by Kathy Laurenhue provides both activities and resources. Here are some catalogs she recommends that you might find helpful:
  - Bi-folkal Productions, Inc., 800-568-5357, [www.bifolkal.org](http://www.bifolkal.org)
  - Dover Publications, Inc., fax: 516-294-9758, [www.doverpublications.com](http://www.doverpublications.com)
  - ElderSong Publications, Inc., 800-397-0533, [www.eldersong.com](http://www.eldersong.com)
  - ElderGames, 800-637-2604, [www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org) (under "publications")
  - Nasco Activity Therapy, 800-558-9595, [www.nascofa.com](http://www.nascofa.com) (ask for the Senior Activities catalog)
  - S&S Primelife, 800-243-9232, [www.swww.com](http://www.swww.com)

Also mentioned in this session was the book, *Another Country: Navigating the Emotional Terrain of Our Elders*, by Mary Pipher, © 1999. This book provides an interesting perspective on the emotional side of aging in America.

If you want to reminisce with an older adult, the decade of the 1950s is a great place to begin. The 1950s had plenty of turmoil, but it was also television's "Golden Age," the height of Rock and Roll, and the decade of poodle skirts, hula hoops, and the first Barbie dolls. Here are some terrific aids to reminiscence:

- *Remembering the Fifties*, a program manual (Bi-Folkal Productions, 800-568-5357)
- *Journey Through the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and Down Memory Lane*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition by Beckie Karras (ElderSong, 800-397-0533)
- *The 50s, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century; Remembering the Decades* (ElderGames, 800-637-2604)
- *The 1950s, Remembering and Reminiscing* by John Artman and Gary Grimm (Gary Grimm & Associates, 800-442-1614)