

YOUR MIND *matters*



Music
Therapy

Food that Supports
Brain Health

Winter Blues
and You

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WARNING SIGNS *that* Memory Care may be Needed

There are many common signs and health considerations associated with aging, but everyone experiences the process at a different pace. Some seniors can live relatively healthy and independent lives with minimal outside support into their 80s, while others may require in-home care or benefit from an assisted living community in their 60s. Knowing what is normal and looking out for a few key changes in health and behavior can help you decide when to seek outside help and support.

In addition to common age-related physical issues such as arthritis and balance problems, many older adults struggle with everyday household tasks and memory problems ranging from forgetfulness to dementia and Alzheimer's disease. Dealing with these struggles may cause embarrassment, fear or the desire not to be a burden.

If you do not live in close proximity, asking a friend or neighbor to check in on your family member or friend periodically can help identify any changes in behavior, personality or normal routine before things progress.

Here are a few common issues that may be a sign a senior's needs are evolving and changing.

DISHEVELED APPEARANCE/CHANGES IN PERSONAL GROOMING HABITS

It is normal for personal styles to change and evolve as we age, and if mom suddenly decides to celebrate her retirement or 40-year wedding anniversary by dying her hair pink (it worked for Helen Mirren, after all!), chances are she is just having some fun and experimenting with her creativity. But if a senior's personal grooming habits suddenly begin to decline without explanation, it could be a sign they are struggling to keep up with their physical needs or might be suffering from depression.

Likewise, if an older adult has always maintained an organized and tidy home and it is suddenly messy and disheveled, or there are piles of unpaid or unopened bills and dishes piling up in the sink, it can be a sign help is needed.

UNEXPLAINED WEIGHT LOSS

A certain degree of bone loss and smaller stature are normal parts of aging, even for otherwise healthy seniors. But rapid or unexplained changes in weight can be a sign of illness or difficulty consistently preparing meals or eating enough to maintain a healthy weight.

Maintaining a healthy weight is important for seniors, who account for approximately 25 percent of diabetes cases in the United States according to the American Diabetes Association. Eating a balanced diet with enough of the vital nutrients is also important for older adults to maintain healthy bone and muscle mass and density as they get older, which can help protect them during falls and other age-related accidents and injuries.

MEMORY PROBLEMS AND BEHAVIOR THAT SEEM OUT OF CHARACTER

A bout of occasional forgetfulness from time to time is probably normal and not necessarily a cause for alarm. Memories can fade over time, and it is easy to forget names or events from the distant past, especially as we transition through different life phases.

But if someone is suddenly struggling to remember vital information, getting lost in familiar environments, having trouble identifying close friends and family, or exhibiting violent or aggressive behavior that seems out of character, they may be exhibiting signs of dementia. If you suspect that someone in your life is exhibiting signs or symptoms of dementia or Alzheimer's disease, discuss the symptoms with their doctor and request an evaluation.

DIFFICULTY WITH HEARING OR VISION

If you're suddenly struggling to hear your family member or friend on your weekly phone call over a blaring TV or radio, or they frequently ask you to repeat things during conversations, it may be a sign that they are having hearing issues. Likewise, seniors should have their vision checked regularly, especially if they live alone or still drive a car.

LOSS OF INTEREST IN PERSONAL INTERESTS AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES

Energy levels and interests naturally evolve and change over time, but the sudden loss of interest in normal routines and longstanding activities can be a sign that someone is suffering from depression or having difficulty leaving the home on their own.

WHAT'S NEXT?

If you notice changes in your loved one's physical appearance or behavior, don't panic. There are resources available to address physical, mental and emotional needs, whether it involves in-home care from a home health aide or comprehensive care and services. ■

SIGNS AND BEHAVIORS *of* Dementia in Seniors



Dementia and Alzheimer's disease currently affect over five million Americans over the age of 65, although it can and does affect younger men and women. Typically associated with the most common symptoms like memory loss and forgetfulness, Alzheimer's dementia progresses from mild cognitive impairment to serious (severe) cognitive impairment with loss of language and motor skills. Other dementia impacts can vary. It is important to recognize the early signs, symptoms and contact your physician for more information.

The Most Common Signs and Symptoms of Dementia

Like every health condition, dementia affects everyone differently. Symptoms can develop slowly and build progressively over time. Some of the early warning signs and symptoms of dementia in seniors include:

- Short-term memory loss and difficulty finding the right words or phrasing
- Visible changes in mood and attitude, such as unexplained outbursts of anger
- Confusion and difficulty completing tasks
- Obsessive and repetitive behaviors tied to memory loss
- Changes to spatial relation processing abilities, resulting in accidents or difficulty with directions, getting lost on the way to the grocery store or finding the way back home, for example
- Difficulty with change or disruptions to normal patterns and routines, which can result in fear, stress, and anxiety

Causes and Risk Factors for Dementia

According to the Alzheimer's Association, there are a number of factors that can potentially increase the risk of developing Alzheimer's disease and dementia:

- Age
- Family history
- Genetics and Heredity
- Race and ethnicity
Hispanic and African American adults have been found more likely to suffer from dementia and Alzheimer's disease than their Caucasian counterparts

Signs and Symptoms of Advanced Dementia

As dementia progresses, its symptoms attempt to rob the person's quality of life and well-being. It impacts their ability to perform everyday tasks and activities they once enjoyed. Advanced dementia can also cause psychological changes and problems such as:

- Changes in personality
- Depression and anxiety
- Inappropriate behavior
- Paranoia
- Agitation

The severity and intensity of dementia symptoms vary from person to person, and depending on their individual circumstances, many families find it difficult to offer the full range of care necessary to keep those with dementia safe and comfortable.

How to Support a Person With Dementia

In-home caregivers and other memory care resources are available to support seniors dealing with dementia to maintain their dignity, sense of purpose and quality of life. There are memory care programs designed to offer custom and individualized attention to ensure that all of your loved one's needs are met now and as their symptoms progress and evolve. ■

HOW DEMENTIA AFFECTS MEN vs WOMEN



According to the Alzheimer's Association, dementia is a general term for a decline in mental ability severe enough to interfere with daily life. Alzheimer's is the most common type of dementia.

Some key warning signs that point to an Alzheimer's diagnosis include:

1 | MEMORY PROBLEMS. Forgetting recently-learned information or important dates or events. Having to ask for the same information over and over and needing to rely on reminder notes or family members for things that used to be handled with ease.

2 | COMPLETING FAMILIAR TASKS. Routine daily tasks become more and more of a challenge, such as driving to familiar locations, managing a budget or remembering the rules of a favorite game.

3 | TROUBLE MAKING A PLAN. Changes in ability to develop and follow a plan like following a recipe or keeping track of monthly bills. Tasks may take much longer to do than they did formerly or it may be difficult to concentrate on the task at hand.

4 | CONFUSION CONCERNING TIME OR PLACE. Those with Alzheimer's can lose track of dates, seasons, or the passage of time. Sometimes they may be confused about where they are or how they got there.

5 | VISUAL IMAGES AND SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS. Difficulty reading, judging distances, and determining color or contrast can affect those with Alzheimer's and can cause real problems with driving.

6 | PROBLEMS WITH WORDS WHEN SPEAKING OR WRITING. Those with Alzheimer's may stop in the middle of a conversation with no idea how to continue. They may repeat themselves or struggle with finding the right word.

7 | LOSING THE ABILITY TO RETRACE STEPS. They may no longer have the ability to go back over steps to find lost articles. They may accuse others of stealing.

8 | POOR JUDGEMENT. When dealing with money, they may no longer be able to make good decisions. They may pay less attention to grooming or personal hygiene.

9 | WITHDRAWAL FROM SOCIAL ACTIVITIES. They may remove themselves from social interactions or hobbies. They may have difficulty keeping up with favorite sports teams.

10 | CHANGES IN MOOD AND PERSONALITY. They can become confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful, or anxious. They can be easily upset or become upset when their routine is disrupted.

All of these warning signs are not necessarily present in all persons who have Alzheimer's. New research suggests that Alzheimer's disease affects women and men differently. In fact, it is now known that Alzheimer's disease affects women more severely than it does men.

While it is true that the majority of symptoms and signs of dementia are seen in both genders, according to research, some differences can be

more prevalent in one or the other and the rate and degree to which certain symptoms develop may be different.

Women with Alzheimer's disease can experience a decline in their cognitive abilities more dramatically than men at the same stage of the disease. Language skills and memory are also impacted sooner in women than in men.

Progression of Symptoms A study found that once the initial symptoms of dementia appear in men and women, they tend to progress at a faster rate in women than men. The reasoning for this correlation is not well understood but is suspected to be genetic or environmental in origin.

Memory Women were seen to experience memory impairment earlier in the course of dementia than men.

Depression Men with symptoms of depression were found to have a significantly higher risk of developing dementia, particularly Alzheimer's disease, compared to women with symptoms of depression.

Verbal Skills Men were seen to retain verbal fluency longer than women. This is the ability to correctly perform naming tasks, and the ability to successfully perform delayed recall of words.

Aggression Men are more likely to be aggressive and act out. They may become agitated and yell or curse at their caregivers.

Wandering Men are more likely to exhibit wandering tendencies.

Inappropriate Sexual Behavior Some men may act in sexually inappropriate ways.



what to
look for

Researchers at the University of Hertfordshire in the UK believe that the drop in the level of the hormone estrogen after menopause may affect how the disease develops in women. In the UK, women make up two-thirds of the 850,000 individuals living with dementia.

Professor Keith Laws of the School of Life and Medical Sciences at the University of Hertfordshire, who led the study, said the findings could play an important part in understanding the risk factors, progression, and treatment of the disease.

He added, "It is therefore fundamental that we continue to identify the role of sex differences to enable more accurate diagnoses and open up doors for new treatments to emerge."

Supported by a new grant from the Alzheimer's Association, researchers at the University of Southern California explore a key Alzheimer's gene and how it disproportionately impacts women. Proposed theories range from differences in health care usage and lifestyle factors to lifespan and other biological variations.

Christian Pike at the USC Leonard Davis School of Gerontology, studies the disparity of incidence of Alzheimer's in women vs. men at the deepest level. He examines key genes involved in the disease and how their effects differ in males and females.

Professor Pike explains, "Men and women are affected by Alzheimer's disease differently, both in terms of disease development and progression. Understanding the underlying bases of these differences should be useful in determining whether we need to view prevention and treatment differently depending upon gender."

Professor Pike's newest project will examine the specific gene which is a primary genetic risk factor for Alzheimer's disease. The presence of this gene disproportionately increases the risk for the disease in women versus men. He explained, "Even in the absence of dementia, this gene, the APOE4, is associated with significantly increased atrophy and dysfunction of the brain and that affects women much more strongly than men."

The gene increases inflammation in the brain and other genetic risk factors that also affect the functioning of the immune system.

Pike's new study is supported by a \$250,000 Sex and Gender in Alzheimer's (SAGA) research grant from the Alzheimer's Association, the first-ever grants which aim to accelerate research on sex differences in Alzheimer's disease.

"It is therefore fundamental that we continue to identify the role of sex differences to enable more accurate diagnoses and open up doors for new treatments to emerge."

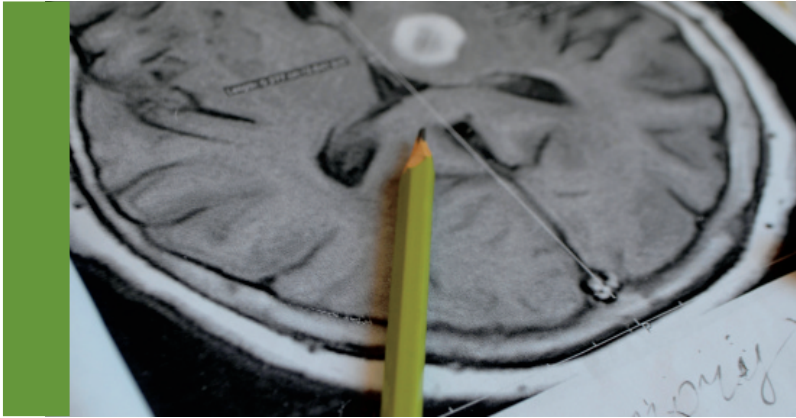
Another researcher at USC, Professor Terrence Town from the Keck School of Medicine, will study how sex differences in brain structure and hormonal changes during aging interact to affect the development of Alzheimer's. He is also looking to see if estrogen treatment can help prevent these changes.

SAGA is a core component of the Alzheimer's Association Women's Initiative. Maria Carrillo, Alzheimer's Association chief science officer, said, "Research showed us how women experience heart disease differently from men. We need to look at Alzheimer's in a similar way. If we can better understand the disease processes and progression in men and women, we have an opportunity to tailor how we approach detection, diagnosis, and therapeutic approaches based on sex." According to the Alzheimer's Association's 2018 Facts and Figures report, almost two-thirds of Americans with Alzheimer's disease are women.

Perhaps because of the differences in the structure of the brains of men vs women, there are behavioral differences in those who suffer from Alzheimer's disease, which affect the symptoms being experienced. ■

WHAT TO EXPECT

after a Dementia Diagnosis



Dementia is a broad category of diseases that causes loss of memory and deterioration in other mental functions. Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, accounting for 60 to 80 percent of cases. No one test can determine whether an individual has dementia. A dementia diagnosis depends on the results of a range of medical tests and a person's medical history.

A dementia finding is life-changing for those diagnosed, as well as for their families and others close to them. There is currently no cure for dementia, but treatments are available that may help relieve some symptoms. Those with dementia may progress through the stages of the disease at different speeds and with varying symptoms.

Once diagnosed, patients experience a wave of emotions and numbness may set in as individuals are unsure of what to do or how to deal with the overwhelming news. It is common for patients to grieve the losses they are already experiencing and the future changes that the disease will present in time.

An Emotional Roller Coaster

ANGER

There is a loss of control when the direction of one's life goes off on a course that is very different than the one planned.

DENIAL

It is common to not only feel overwhelmed by the diagnosis but to question it and deny its accuracy.

DEPRESSION

Sadness and hopelessness may be felt because of the uncontrollable way life is changing.

RESENTMENT

"Why me?" and the related question of "What did I do to deserve this?" are asked.

FEAR

Thoughts about an unknown future and how the family will be affected are frequent.

ISOLATION

There may be feelings that no one understands what the dementia patient is experiencing. Patients may lose interest in relationships with others and distance themselves.

RELIEF

By assigning a name to the symptoms being experienced, a dementia diagnosis validates the concerns and can lead to positive actions.

Coming to terms with a dementia diagnosis and the emotions that go with it helps to move forward and discover ways in which to live a fulfilling life. Depending on the phase of dementia, individuals are able to function at different levels.

The Phases of Dementia

Mild Dementia

Patients may be able to function independently but will experience memory lapses that can affect daily life. This may include forgetting words or where things are located. There may be memory loss of recent events and difficulty with problem-solving and complex tasks, such as managing finances. Personality changes, such as becoming more subdued or withdrawn, are common, and there may be trouble organizing or expressing thoughts. Patients may misplace objects or get lost.

Moderate Dementia

Those with moderate dementia will need more assistance in their daily lives. It will become more difficult to perform daily activities and self-care, including getting dressed, taking a bath, and grooming. There will be increasing confusion or poor judgment and more memory loss, including no memory of events in the more distant past. Significant personality and behavior changes will occur, often caused by agitation and unwarranted suspicion. Individuals may sleep during the day and be restless at night.

Severe Dementia

Further mental decline as well as worsening in physical capabilities are expected once the disease progresses to severe dementia. There may be a loss in the ability to communicate and a need for full-time assistance with eating and activities of daily living (ADLs). Patients may be unable to walk or sit or to hold their heads up. Eventually, there is a loss of ability to swallow or to control the bladder and bowel functions. There is an increased susceptibility to infections, such as pneumonia.

Those with dementia will progress through these stages at different rates and with differing symptoms. While no cure is available for dementia, early diagnosis can help people and their families make plans for the future. Early diagnosis also allows

people to participate in clinical trials. This helps researchers develop new treatments and to eventually find a cure.

Taking Care of Emotional Needs

It is important to find healthy ways to deal with the emotions following a dementia diagnosis. Once a commitment is made to take care of one's emotional needs, this new phase of life can be experienced with a sense of connection to emotional health. There are a variety of approaches to aid in accomplishing this. The following suggestions may be helpful:

- Talk to your doctor about your emotional well-being. Your doctor can determine the most appropriate treatment plan to address your concerns.
- Use a written or audio journal to capture your thoughts and feelings about the diagnosis. Take the time you need to feel sad and to mourn the losses you are experiencing.
- Discuss your family and friends' feelings in dealing with the diagnosis. Speak honestly about your emotions and theirs.
- Create a support system to include those who are also experiencing the early stages of dementia. Join the ALZConnected Message Board and learn more about the support programs available to patients and their families.
- Discuss your condition with a counselor or clergy member who can help you to see the situation from another perspective and help you to understand more fully the emotions you are feeling.
- Stay involved by continuing to enjoy the activities you love for as long as you are able.

Support is Available

There is no correct approach to dealing with a dementia diagnosis. People deal with this diagnosis in different ways and some days are more difficult than others. It is important not to feel disconnected, isolated or abandoned.

There is a wealth of resources for those with dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, from the Alzheimer's Association. Visit their website to learn more. ■

5 TIPS *for* How to Talk to Someone Who Has Dementia:



EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

There are close to 50 million people living with some form of dementia throughout the world, with roughly 10 million new cases diagnosed every year, according to the World Health Organization. Because dementia affects memory, cognition and speaking ability and is progressive, conversing with people who have the disease becomes increasingly difficult for their friends and relatives.

People living with dementia are especially vulnerable to the effects of social isolation and loneliness, which can have a significant impact on their emotional, mental and even physical health. Therefore, it's important for family and friends to stay actively involved in their lives and to help them remain engaged, whether they live in a private home or an assisted living community.

Depending upon their symptoms and extent of memory loss and cognitive issues, communicating with someone with dementia can be challenging and often frustrating for both them and you. Worrying about or being unsure of what to say or how to speak to them is normal; the process requires some trial and error as everyone adjusts to the new circumstances.

Here are a few tips to help you adjust and successfully communicate with your loved one at every stage of the process.

BE IN THE MOMENT

Memory loss is one of the most common symptoms of dementia. Just as dementia can disrupt a person's quality of life and ability to fully participate in the activities and hobbies they once enjoyed, it also affects their ability to talk about them. Maybe you used to have lively, detailed conversations about your loved one's life experiences, only to find they suddenly seem uninterested or unable to recall details or whole chunks of time and memories. Because dementia symptoms tend to get progressively worse, conversations can get more and more difficult.

Rather than trying to force a topic or pushing the person to remember specific details, structure your conversation in the present. Ask simple questions about their day, their current activities and their interests. Keep the conversation light and straightforward, speaking to them directly and in your normal tone of voice. Follow their cues, and remember to smile and make eye contact, act approvingly and warmly, and use non-verbal cues as well to help keep them at ease.

BE PATIENT

Navigating the process with a person with dementia requires getting comfortable with the unknown. It may take some time to find a new rhythm and routine that works well for everyone, most especially the person living with dementia. Things like forgetting names and dates or repeating what you may have just talked about are common. They may speak more slowly than before or have difficulty focusing or following a conversation for long periods of time.

Let the conversation flow naturally and at a pace that works for you both. As long as you're

connecting and engaged, they will benefit from the conversation—even if they are fuzzy about or miss details.

USE NAMES

In addition to using your own name when speaking to your loved one, referring to people by their name in conversation, rather than as "she," "he" or "they" is helpful for those with dementia and memory loss. In addition to having difficulty following a complicated or complex conversation, it can also be confusing to keep track of multiple people in a conversation, especially if they're not present.

TAKE IT ONE CONVERSATION AT A TIME

There will be good days and bad days. You may be happy to find your loved one animated and engaged one day, only to find them listless and with less clarity and focus on your next visit. Although it can be discouraging and upsetting, it's important to understand that dementia is unpredictable; it doesn't progress in a linear way.

PRACTICE ACTIVE LISTENING

When a loved one is experiencing dementia or any age-related health issue, it's natural to want to provide active support. But you don't have to drive the conversation or do all of the talking. Encourage them to speak freely; don't be afraid to ask questions if you are unsure or confused about something they say.

Do your best to meet them "where they are" on any given day. If they're having a bad day or feeling less communicative, your presence can still comfort them and help to put them at ease, even if the conversation is more limited than usual. ■

7 BENEFITS *of* CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUPS



Caregiver burnout is a common problem among those tasked with caring for an aging parent or loved one. In most cases, adult children and caregivers must balance the demands of their own lives, careers, and families against the needs of the person they are caring for, which can ultimately lead to stress, anxiety, depression, physical exhaustion, social isolation, guilt, resentment, and even physical health problems from poor diet, lack of exercise and self-neglect.

Taking time to meet your own needs while caring for a loved one may seem selfish or self-indulgent, but it is necessary for the ongoing health and well-being of everyone involved.

Caregiver support groups are a great way to connect and share your experiences with people in similar circumstances.

What a Caregiver Support Group Can Do for You

Even if you have a large family and strong social network of your own, it can be difficult to share your experiences and gain insight from even the most well-meaning friends and relatives. Joining a support group offers many

advantages, from connecting you with a diverse group of people who are in a similar situation, to providing you with the freedom and anonymity necessary to adequately voice your feelings and concerns without fear of judgment.

Here are just a few of the benefits and positive effects joining a caregiver support group can bring you and your family:

1 A Great Source of Additional Resources and Useful Information

If you are caring for someone with Alzheimer's Disease or dementia, a caregiver support group can be an excellent resource for information on everything from the symptoms and behaviors to look out for, to effective coping strategies and tips for safely caring for your loved one while helping to maintain their dignity.

Maybe you have tips and resources of your own to share, such as recipes or conversation starters that have helped you to communicate better or calm your loved one down when they are feeling distressed or agitated, or having trouble remembering specific details or events. An hour with a support group will not only make you feel better, it can also potentially save you countless hours looking for answers and doing research.

2 Emotional Support

Being a caregiver can be a rewarding experience, but it can also be an incredibly overwhelming and stressful experience, especially if there are illnesses or physical and mental limitations involved. Talking your feelings through with peers, or just simply listening to the experiences of people in a similar situation can have a calming and healing effect. It can also be good for your physical health as well. A healthy outlet for your emotions is an important resource that can help you to develop healthy coping skills.

3 Reduce Anxiety, Stress, and Social Isolation

Being a caregiver often means having to make sacrifices in order to make time and be available for the other person. Maybe you used to have a standing yoga date with your spouse or co-worker or looked forward to meeting your college friends for Sunday brunch once a month. Although the sacrifices are usually temporary, losing your

social connections, which are often the way many people manage anxiety and stress, can lead to depression and even resentment. Connecting with other caregivers can help to fill the void that opens when you feel disconnected from your life and peers before you became a caregiver.

Worrying about your own stress levels and loneliness may not seem like something you can afford to do when you are focused on caring for someone who is dependent on you, but you can only offer what you have to give. A constant state of stress and anxiety will ultimately make it harder for you to offer someone else your support and attention.

4 Help You to Refresh

Depending on your situation and your loved one's needs, sneaking away for a few hours to get a massage or go for a long run may not be practical. But the simple act of getting out of the house to go meet with a support group can help to recharge your batteries and make you feel less guilty about taking time for yourself if you are struggling with that.

5 Improve Your Quality of Life

You've probably heard the phrase "you can't fill from an empty cup." If you are feeling worn out and depleted, it will ultimately affect your ability to take care of someone else. Investing in your own mental and emotional health is an act of love towards yourself and the person you are assisting.

6 Help to Regain a Sense of Control over Your Situation

Dealing with illness and the aging process is usually an unpredictable situation, and the loss of control for both seniors and their caregivers can be difficult to manage. A support group can help you to make sense of and accept your situation without judging or putting too much pressure on yourself and things out of your control.

7 Gain Perspective

Sometimes the simple realization you are not alone can make a huge difference.



HIGH BLOOD PRESSURE

May Increase the **RISK OF DEMENTIA**

The American Heart Association stated that high blood pressure in middle age may contribute to the development of dementia. This hypothesis has not yet been scientifically proven.

As treatments for dementia remain difficult and the number of cases worldwide is expected to triple from current levels by 2050, trials are currently underway to see if high blood pressure presents a threat to developing this brain disease.

High blood pressure damages the blood vessels of the brain and leads to hardening of the arteries. It also affects tiny blood vessels and the ability of the brain to control blood flow, which is essential to keeping it working in a normal way.

Because it is clear dementia begins in midlife, starting to control high blood pressure when people are in their 50s could be key to helping diminish or avoid dementia. Physicians and scientists are concerned starting to control high blood pressure later in life (in a person's 60s or older) may offer

no benefit or could even do harm.

Maintaining a healthy weight; exercising; eating a diet with plenty of vegetables, fruits, fiber and low-fat dairy products, less salt and fat; limiting alcohol to two drinks a day for men and one a day for women; all are ways to reduce blood pressure to desired levels. If these measures are not successful, a doctor can prescribe medication.

Whether or not studies define a link between high blood pressure and dementia, managing their blood pressure should be a priority for everyone. That's because high blood pressure affects other parts of the body; controlling it saves stress on the brain, the heart and the kidneys, making it important to overall health.

For more information regarding high blood pressure and dementia, visit the Alzheimer's Association's website www.alz.org. ■



MUSIC THERAPY *for* Dementia Residents

Studies have shown that music can increase brain connectivity in Residents with dementia. But what does this mean? According to the *Journal of Prevention of Alzheimer's Disease*, research demonstrates how "...personalized music playlists can activate regions of the brain typically not touched by early Alzheimer's disease and may offer a new way to approach anxiety, depression, and agitation in patients."

Jeff Anderson, MD, one of the authors of the study and an associate professor of radiology at the University of Utah Health, says that the research was designed to look at the mechanism of action in the brain, not necessarily to test whether music has an effect on therapy." He further explained the way music affects dementia Residents really hasn't had the benefit of rigorous science to back up how it might work or why it might work under certain circumstances.

When Residents with Alzheimer's-related dementia listened to clips from a personalized playlist – music that had a particular meaning to each individual – they found during MRI scans that functional connectivity continued even after the music was played. Dr. Anderson said, "We don't know how long this effect lasts, but music may do more than just stimulate the attention network. It may be able to get different regions of the brain to talk to one another. Music may be like a trigger stimulating the brain."

More research on the way

Research studies like this one are just beginning. The National Institutes of Health has partnered with the Kennedy Center to call for additional research

into the effects of music on aging and dementia. Dr. Anderson said, "I expect that many laboratories will flesh out how this works, what the effects are, what conditions it helps, and the best uses to make people's lives better as they go through the aging process." He added, "Playing music isn't going to cure Alzheimer's disease, but it helps. If you have patients who are severely affected and they need less anxiety medication and less medication for depression or their attention improves, those gains can be very meaningful."

Music therapy

Caregivers have used music to make a difference in the lives of those they care for with dementia, depression, autism, brain injuries, and more. The field of Music Therapy was debuted in 1950 but has gained increasing awareness in hospitals, adult day care, senior centers, and nursing homes. There are more than 6,000 music therapists who are nationally certified by the American Music Therapy Association. Healthcare workers are using music and music therapists to help in treating a growing list of conditions, including dementia. Anecdotal evidence shows that music can tap into memories and reduce anxiety, pain, heart rate, and blood pressure.

If you are a caregiver for a loved one with dementia, music therapists offer these suggestions...

Create a playlist of familiar and favorite songs.

What type of music was most-often listened to? Show tunes? Opera? Rock n' Roll?

U.S. Representative Gabrielle Giffords was unable to speak after she was shot in 2011 and suffered brain damage. Her mother, father, and husband knew her favorite songs and surrounded her with the music she loved – “American Pie,” “Brown-Eyed Girl,” “Over the Rainbow.” Gabby was able to sing several words in a phrase, but couldn't put a three-word sentence together on her own. Gabby's music therapist, Maegan Morrow, told Gabby to sing her needs: “I want to go to bed.” “I'm tired.”

One caregiver reported that her 90-year old mother became sad when it was time for her to leave. “When I put on classical or opera music, she wouldn't miss me. Instead, she'd wave ‘goodbye,’ close her eyes and be transported by the music.”

Choose a music source.

What works best for you – a CD player, MP3 player, iPod, tablet, or a turntable with vinyl records? You can use your local library to borrow music or take advantage of a website like Pandora (Pandora.com) or Spotify (spotify.com) to create a personalized playlist.

Download an app.

Designed by a music therapist, SingFit and Sing-Magic are much like portable karaoke machines that help participants sing along by providing lyric prompts, volume keys, and voice playback. Play songs at varying speeds with Magic Piano and you can sing along.

Match music to activities.

Use music to transition from one activity to another, whether it is moving to another room or to a different task. Play peaceful music upon awakening

and pick up the pace with an active, upbeat song when getting dressed for the day. Try singing directions rather than speaking them. To coax a loved one to take a shower, put on Duke Ellington and dance together into the shower room.

Make music together.

Music can provide a way to connect that is meaningful and helpful to both caregiver and Resident. Sitting and listening to music together can be bonding. A pilot study by New York University Center for Cognitive Neurology found that members of a New York City chorus made up of those with early to mid-stage Alzheimer's and their caregiving spouses and children reported some interesting findings.

Participants cited more self-esteem, better moods, less depression, and a greater quality of life after 13 rehearsals and one concert. Participants said the camaraderie of the chorus helped to ward off the loneliness that often accompanies caring for those with dementia. Husbands and wives appreciated being with others who are dealing with the same issues. Plus, singing teaches good breathing techniques, musical memory exercises and movement – all stress relievers and effective mental and physical exercise.

For non-singers.

Consider a rhythm group or drum with others. You don't need a musical background and it is fun!

Be sure to tune in to your own needs.

Music is a source of pleasure for many. Caregivers need stress relief and a sense of well-being and music can provide a way to “recharge the batteries.” Music can help them relax and escape from everyday problems for much needed moments of respite. ■



BRAIN MATTERS

10 FOODS THAT SUPPORT BRAIN HEALTH

A big part of aging well is brain health. As we age, our brains tend to lose some of their elasticity, making the connections we need to focus on tasks and remember things more difficult. By ensuring your brain is healthy, you can help prevent these things from happening. The latest research shows a healthy diet and lifestyle can, no matter our age, improve the functioning of our brains. According to Harvard Medical School, a healthy diet rich in essential nutrients is one of the key factors in preventing cognitive decline as you age. From maintaining a healthy weight to eating “brain-friendly” foods, what you put on your plate on a daily basis can affect everything from mental clarity to having enough energy to keep up with the grandchildren.

Here are 10 brain-friendly foods to include in your healthy diet:

Berries, anyone? Most berries are full of antioxidants, great for boosting the brain. Blueberries can improve your motor skills as well as overall learning capacity. Berries such as strawberries also contain fisetin, the most effective flavonoid at causing new brain growth, which improves your memory.

What about nuts? Nuts are full of Omega-3 fatty acids, as well as folate, vitamin E, and vitamin B6, all important nutrients for the brain allowing you to think more clearly and positively. Walnuts are the top nut for brain health because they have a significantly high concentration of DHA, a type of Omega-3 fatty acid shown to improve cognitive performance and prevent age-related cognitive decline. Vitamin E intake is also associated with improved cognitive function; almonds and hazelnuts are two of the most concentrated sources of vitamin E.

It's pumpkin time! Pumpkins are packed with nutrients that support brain health including B-vitamins like riboflavin and folic acid, as well as a good source of Vitamin C. Carotenoids (which give pumpkins their bright orange color) are nutrients that protect against aging by neutralizing free radicals. Don't skip the pumpkin seeds. They are a great source of dietary fiber and monounsaturated fatty acids, good for the heart and gut. They are also a good source of protein, including the amino acid tryptophan, which helps our bodies produce serotonin, a mood-regulating hormone acting as a “feel good” neurotransmitter improving mood and relaxation.

Pomegranate – Yum! The antioxidants pomegranate juice contains help maintain your general well-being. Numerous studies have suggested the nutrients contained in pomegranates can help protect your brain from different forms of damage.

Knowing how helpful pomegranate juice can be may give you the motivation to make pomegranate juice a permanent component of your diet.

Flax – you said what? Not everyone is familiar with flax. Flax is a seed rich in the plant-based Omega-3 fatty acid Alpha-linolenic acid which helps to control blood clotting, build cell membranes in the brain and reduce inflammation. Add ground flax to your oatmeal for a delicious, nutritious breakfast!

Leafy greens Leafy green vegetables are full of B vitamins such as vitamin B6, B12, and folate. B vitamins are essential to nerve and brain function. These vitamins help greatly when it comes time to remember old information.

It's Salmon Time... Salmon is full of Omega-3, a fatty acid known to be highly beneficial to the brain. Omega-3 also provides more oxygen to the brain and allows us to retain new information while still remembering old information. The best fish to eat for brain health are salmon, tuna, and herring. Vitamin B12 is important for everything from maintaining healthy nerve and blood vessels to making DNA. B12 deficiency has been shown to lead to a number of symptoms such as depression, balance problems, and memory loss, all higher risk factors for seniors.

Eggs Eggs are full of vitamin B12 as well as lecithin. Vitamin B12 helps to fight brain shrinkage. The yolk is high in choline, the precursor to acetylcholine, a neurotransmitter in your brain that helps improve your memory. Eating 1-2 egg products a day can be great for your brain.

Tea Green or black tea is full of catechins, great for keeping your mind sharp, fresh, and functioning properly. Not only do they keep your brain working right, they also allow it to relax and help fight mental fatigue.

Did you say Dark Chocolate? It's true: dark chocolate is perfect for brain health and besides who doesn't love a good piece of chocolate? The flavonoids and antioxidants in dark chocolate with higher cocoa content have been found to act as a brain food which can potentially protect cognitive function and lower the risk of dementia. Dark chocolate is loaded with antioxidants and contains important minerals for the brain such as magnesium. Magnesium helps the brain relax, and sleep better.

So there you have it – 10 delicious foods you can incorporate into your diet to help your brain stay healthy and strong. The best diet for your brain is one that's good for your heart and blood vessels. That means eating lots of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains; eating lean proteins from fish and legumes, and choosing healthy unsaturated fats such as olive oil rather than saturated fats such as butter and coconut oil. Following these guidelines as seen in the Mediterranean diet not only helps promote long-term health but helps prevent many age-associated brain diseases and ailments such as stroke, Alzheimer's disease, and cognitive decline.



The menu at SALMON Health and Retirement is loaded with brain healthy foods such as flax, leafy greens, salmon, berries and more.

Taking care of the brain for our Elders is a top priority for us. ■



7 TIPS to IMPROVE SENIOR MENTAL HEALTH

From memory problems and cognitive decline to a growing loneliness epidemic, seniors are especially vulnerable to mental health issues. Studies have shown common mental health issues like anxiety and depression can also have a negative impact on general health and wellness. In many cases, sadness and social isolation can have additional negative side effects and increase the risk of serious health problems. But the good news is there are a number of activities and resources available to help keep the older adults close to you engaged and in good mental health and spirits.

Staying connected and maintaining strong, meaningful social connections with friends and family goes a long way towards preventing mental health issues in seniors.

As circumstances and family dynamics change, active retirement living and adult day health programs can offer seniors a supportive community and social environment to keep up with the activities they love and even discover a few new ones!

Play Mind Games

Just as the body needs physical activity and stimulation to stay healthy, the brain needs stimulation to stay sharp and avoid cognitive decline common as we age. Any activity that keeps the mind engaged and working towards solving problems contributes to brain health, but some of the most common and accessible activities for seniors include:

- Reading and writing (journaling can also help to manage and alleviate the effects of stress and anxiety)
- Learning a new language
- Playing an instrument
- Playing puzzles and games

Get Physical

From taking regular walks to yoga classes and ballroom dancing, exercise and physical activity are good for both the mind and the body by boosting confidence and reducing the risk of falling, for example.

Stay Connected with Friends

Time and distance can make it difficult for anyone to maintain close relationships with old friends, especially as we age. For older adults, keeping in touch with the important people in their lives can help to stave off loneliness and feelings of isolation that can lead to depression, as well as mental and physical decline. Teach your older relative or friend how to connect with new and old friends on social media and Skype. Or keep it simple and encourage them to write letters or set up a regular schedule for a good old-fashioned phone call.

Sign Up for an Adult Day Health Program

Adult day health is a great resource for seniors looking to stay active, make new friends, pick up new skills, and join a friendly and welcoming community of peers and skilled nursing and care professionals. For example, many Adult Day Health Centers offer a wide array of programs including a morning coffee social, medication assistance, personal care and grooming, group exercise, crafts, music and movies, discussion groups and educational programs, seasonal activities, parties, and outings.

Pick up a New Hobby

After retirement, it is still important to maintain a routine. Everyone has a personal wish list of dreams and activities they put off for "one day." Retirement is the perfect time for seniors to dust off their "bucket list" and pursue a lifelong goal, be it gardening, sewing, painting or French cooking!

Volunteering

Many seniors find fulfillment and a sense of purpose in volunteering for a worthy cause. With no shortage of organizations and causes in need of support, there are many possibilities for older adults to get involved and feel valued and needed.

Caring for a Pet

Where appropriate, animals can help keep seniors active and busy and offer companionship in the process with their unconditional love. Volunteering at an animal shelter is also a good way to connect with animals if you don't care for one of your own. ■



Following the MEDITERRANEAN DIET Can Decrease Risk of Dementia

The Mediterranean diet has long been touted for several health benefits, but recent research found following this plan can significantly reduce the risk of dementia.

A study recently presented at the Alzheimer's Association's International Conference in London found older adults who followed the Mediterranean diet or similar diets lowered their risk of dementia by a third.

The study out of the University of California, San Francisco's School of Medicine studied 6,000 older adults with an average age of 68. Those who followed the Mediterranean diet had 30 to 35 percent lower risk of cognitive impairment. Other studies have shown similarly promising results. A 2015 study revealed that seniors who closely follow the Mediterranean diet had a 53 percent lower chance of getting Alzheimer's disease, while those following it moderately had a 35 percent lower chance. Many studies have also shown the Mediterranean diet can help aid weight loss, and prevent heart attacks, stroke, and diabetes.

What is the Mediterranean diet?

The Mediterranean diet is based on the diets of people living in the Mediterranean countries such as Italy and Greece, who have better health outcomes than those in other parts of the world.

It is a simple, plant-based diet focused on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, seeds, nuts and

extra virgin olive oil. The diet cuts out or limits refined sugar and flour, and fats other than olive oil.

People who practice the Mediterranean diet do not eat much meat but will often eat fish and small amounts of dairy and poultry.

How to follow the Mediterranean diet

FOCUS ON FRUITS AND VEGETABLES

In the Mediterranean diet, your largest portions should be fruits and vegetables.

USE HEALTHY FATS

Avoid trans fats, such as those found in margarine and various processed foods, soybean oil, canola oil, cottonseed oil and others. When cooking, stick to extra virgin olive oil, and get other sources of fat through foods like avocados, nuts, and olives.

EAT MORE FISH

The Mediterranean diet typically involves approximately two servings of fish per week.

AVOID ADDED SUGAR

Avoid table sugar and added sugar found in soda, juices, candy, and desserts.

AVOID REFINED FLOUR

Avoid refined flour found in white bread, pasta, crackers and other food items.

AVOID PROCESSED FOODS

Don't eat processed foods such as hot dogs, sausages, items labeled "low fat" or "diet" or anything that looks like it was made in a factory.

LIMIT MEAT AND DAIRY

Those on the Mediterranean diet eat poultry, eggs, cheese and yogurt in moderation and only rarely eat red meat.

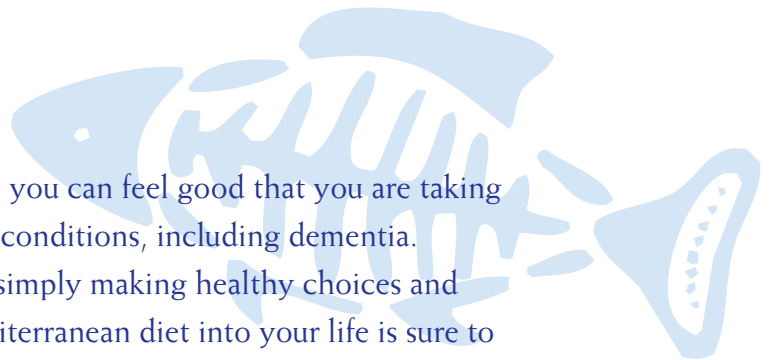
DON'T SHY AWAY FROM WINE

Those who follow the Mediterranean diet strongly believe in the benefits of wine and tend to consume approximately one glass of red wine per day.

AVOID SUGARY DRINKS

Other than wine, those on the Mediterranean diet tend to drink mostly water, as well as tea and coffee. Avoid soda, juice and other sugary drinks.

By following the Mediterranean diet, you can feel good that you are taking steps to decrease your risk of several conditions, including dementia. Even if you cannot follow it closely, simply making healthy choices and incorporating some parts of the Mediterranean diet into your life is sure to improve your overall health. ■



TAPESTRY CORNER



THE WINTER BLUES *and* YOU

By Diane Tonelli OTR/L, MHA CDP, *Clinical Director of Tapestry*

If the winter makes you feel glum, listless and irritable, you're not alone. The days are shorter, holiday bills are piling up ... we have hit the "winter blues" time of year.

Here in New England, the winter blues can be prevalent due to our very cold temperatures and decreased hours of sunlight in addition to the fact most of us have a decreased level of activity and poorer eating habits during winter.

All of us are susceptible, including those with Alzheimer's disease or dementia. Mood swings in those with memory problems can be exaggerated and agitation can creep up more easily as a result of these winter blues.

If you, or a friend or loved one with Alzheimer's disease or dementia are starting to feel glum, listless and irritable this time of year here are five simple tips to follow to shake those blues away:

1 Spend quality time with friends

"Emotional light" is connecting with other people. This is just as critical as environmental light when it comes to eliminating the winter blues. Plan activities outside of the home with people and limit the time you sit at home alone. Research indicates people who boast a large support network of friends are the healthiest and outlive others by approximately 22 percent. Families and memory care communities can help people deal with the feelings of irritability and listlessness and support feelings of belonging to boost self-esteem by hosting engaging social events. The next time you or a loved one is feeling blue, call up a friend for coffee or join a club in your area ... the possibilities are endless, and connecting with other people can do wonders for the emotions.

2 Adopt healthy eating habits

Winter blues can partially be a result of our change in eating habits during the holidays. Get yourself back on a healthy eating schedule and be sure to stay hydrated. Aside from omega 3 fatty acid-rich foods, some examples of foods that can have a beneficial effect on mood include turkey, vegetables, nuts, whole grains, organic potatoes, corn, and rice grain. And of course, don't forget to eat dark chocolate. Consuming dark chocolate, with 70% cocoa or more, on a regular basis is known to enhance mood, amongst other health benefits.



3 Use the internet to stay connected

There are currently many home devices on the market geared toward face-to-face communication. Set up yourself, or your loved one — especially those who are isolated, with a device that can reach out to friends and family. Many older Americans suffer from depression that is often brought on by feelings of isolation. New research has found that using the internet to stay connected can reduce the chances of depression by more than 30 percent.

4 Get regular exercise

With regular physical activity, your body releases endorphins, which help increase energy levels and improve mood. If you can't schedule an hour-long sweat session, carve out 15 minutes for push-ups and jumping jacks before your morning shower, get an exercise routine in during your lunch break, squeeze in a brisk afternoon walk and/or attend an evening yoga flow. Reward yourself with dark chocolate!



5 Get regular amounts of daylight

Whatever the light source, natural sunlight helps to regulate your sleep-wake cycles, which can be thrown off during times where there is less daylight. The restorative nature of sleep and a regular sleep cycle will help stabilize your mood. The best way to get valuable light is to go outside in the sun for 10-20 minutes a day, but that is not often possible in the dead of winter. Using lamps in your home with full spectrum lighting during daylight hours, can be a beneficial alternative.

Beating the winter blues is not impossible, and following these simple tips can go a long way towards regaining a healthy mental outlook, reducing those negative moods.

Your brain and
your body will
thank you!

HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS *for* PEOPLE LIVING *with* ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE



The following ideas for what to buy—and not buy—for people with Alzheimer's disease are from the Alzheimer's Association website. For gift ideas for everyone that help support research into Alzheimer's disease, visit www.shop.alz.org/ for their variety of fine items.

Clothes

Comfortable, easy to remove, easily washable clothes such as sweat suits, knits, large banded socks, shoes with Velcro ties, wrinkle-free nightgowns, nightshirts and robes.

Music

Research shows that music has a positive impact on individuals with Alzheimer's, bringing them back to good times, increasing stimulation and providing an opportunity to interact with family members. So buy favorite CDs or burn a CD full of musical favorites.

Entertainment

Plan an outing to a movie, play or concert, sporting event, museum or possibly an organized holiday shopping outing with friends and family. Give a DVD collection of favorite movies. Consider activities such as scrapbooking or other craft projects that are social in nature.

Framed Photographs or Photo Collages

Copy photos of family members and friends at photo centers, insert the names of the people in the photo and put them in frames or in a photo album created specifically for that person.

Safe Return[®]

Enroll the person in the later stages of Alzheimer's in the Alzheimer's Association's Safe Return[®], a nationwide identification program that provides assistance when a person with Alzheimer's or a related dementia wanders and becomes lost locally or far from home.



Early Stage Gift Ideas

Approximately 2.5 million people currently living with Alzheimer's are in the early stage of the disease, a period when they can live active, healthy lives, but may begin to notice subtle changes.

Here are some gift ideas for people living in the early stages of the disease:

Items to help remember things such as magnetic reminder refrigerator pads; post-it notes, baskets or trays that can be labeled within cabinets or drawers; a small pocket-sized diary or notebook; erasable white boards for key rooms in the house; or a memorable calendar featuring family photos—write in special family occasions such as birthdays and anniversaries.

Items that may help with daily activities such as a memory phone that can store up to eight pictures with the names and contact information of family and friends; an automatic medication dispenser that can help the person living with Alzheimer's remember to take his/her medicine; nightlights that come on automatically when it gets dark; and a clock with the date and time in large type.

Moderate/Late Stage Gift Ideas

People in the later stages of Alzheimer's generally need assistance with day-to-day activities as their memory grows weaker.

Here are some gift ideas for people living in the later stages of the disease:

Items that provide sensory stimulation...in the later stages of the disease, sensory stimulation may bring back pleasant memories, so gift ideas include scented lotions, a fluffy bathrobe in his or her favorite color, a soft blanket or an afghan to keep the person warm.



Items to Avoid

You might want to think twice before buying some gifts. Giving electronics may seem like a good idea to make life easier for someone with Alzheimer's or dementia, but that isn't always the case. If you decide to give someone with the disease a new piece

of electronic equipment, remember to review the operating instructions with them slowly and more than once. Make a copy of the instructions for them and for yourself, so you can talk them through the process on the phone if you need to. ■

The History of SALMON's Tapestry Program



SALMON Health and Retirement's Tapestry Program is grounded in the philosophy that each person living with Alzheimer's disease or dementia is unique, rich in life experiences, and entitled to friendships, feelings of well-being and opportunities to participate in life as fully as possible throughout the various stages of their disease. True to this belief is how the program was founded at Beaumont Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing Center at Westborough over 25 years ago.

In 1993, Administrator Kate Salmon-Robinson and Director of Nursing Karen Brennan realized some Residents were losing weight—a troubling concern. So, Kate and Karen began speaking with nurses, creating an interdisciplinary team and observing Residents to see if they could identify the issue.

"One evening, I was observing the dinner routine for the Residents," Kate recalls. "A woman I'll call Millie, a Resident with Alzheimer's, was escorted

to dinner. As she glanced into the dining room, Millie became unnerved, and turned to walk away." Kate approached Millie and tried to persuade her to enter the dining room. When she refused, Kate asked why she didn't want to come in for dinner.

"I don't have any money," Millie replied.

The dining room at Beaumont at Westborough had been designed as a centerpiece of the community; it was a beautiful setting rivaling any local restaurant

– brass railings, two-story-high windows and ceiling, hanging plants, music, a 15-foot tree in the center and an antique bar. However, while it was intended for Residents to enjoy, a person dealing with memory-related issues such as Millie saw the lovely dining room instead as a place she where she'd need to pay for dinner.

"This was an 'aha moment' for me and our team," says Kate. "People dealing with memory-related issues have a different perspective on day-to-day activities and interactions; it was important for us to understand how to interpret that and create an environment enabling them to thrive."

Kate and Millie's interaction was the beginning of the Tapestry Program, a tailored, individualized approach to memory care at SALMON. Traditional social interactions around meals and entertaining became the roadmap for how to approach recreation programs and day-to-day life for Residents. It started with finding a smaller scale and more quiet space for Residents to dine in their neighborhood and grew into something more as we added amenities the staff requested – like a microwave, mini-fridge, etc. That grew into our concept of a "Country Kitchen" creating a small, intimate dining experience for Residents to assist in preparing and cleaning up meals, something reminiscent of life in their previous homes. Eventually, we redesigned the layouts of the memory care neighborhoods with the Country Kitchen at the center, creating a meeting place for Residents to return. Each change contributed to improved outcomes, like maintaining a healthy weight and minimizing weight loss, for Beaumont Residents.

"We must always be aware of someone's strengths and weakness and look for ways to minimize anxiety and help our Residents experience their best day," says Kate.

Success is really about the relationships we form with our Residents and fostering open, successful communication.

Kate recalls the amazing team who contributed to the development and success of the Tapestry Program and notes how much she learned from Karen Brennan. "When we talk about quality of life, recreation and activities are important. But success is really about the relationships we form with our Residents and fostering open, successful communication."

As part of the third generation of the Salmon family, Kate developed a passion for senior care growing up around Beaumont at Northbridge with her parents, developing relationships with Residents and learning about the different roles within the family business. She attended graduate school to study long-term care and health services management and policy and worked for a regional senior care provider before joining the family business.

Over the years since its inception, the Tapestry Program has continued to evolve to best meet the needs of our Residents, following current research and best practices in memory care that enable SALMON to continue to develop innovative care solutions. Each Resident's care plan incorporates our clinical team, the family, and recreation with a person-centered focus designed to enhance abilities, limit barriers, reduce stress and minimize mood changes. SALMON's unique approach and creative process for the Tapestry Program is in keeping with the philosophy behind the program's formation over 25 years ago.

"At SALMON, we are committed to evolving and improving our programs to align with advancements in care," says Kate. "I'm proud of everything our team has accomplished to reach new heights and the leadership we have in our Clinical Director of the Tapestry Program, Diane Tonelli, OTRL, MHA, CDP, CADDCT." ■



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