



Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC is the Founder and Executive Director of Eldercare Services and is a Fellow and President Elect of the National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers.

## ***Heart Health: Emotions are as important as healthy lifestyles!***

Much is known and communicated to us on the importance of a low fat diet, reducing sodium and regular exercise for heart health. What isn't as widely known is the toxic effect of negative emotions on the heart and how these emotions can actually cause serious cardiac abnormalities.

We think of hearts in February with Valentine's Day and this may generate thoughts of affection and love. It can also be a time of remembrance and might even bring up a longing for those who have since passed from this life, which can lead to depression. Depression is known to reduce serotonin levels in the brain, which in turn can be a catalyst to a cardiac event.

Each of us occasionally gets angry or sad. When these feelings happen infrequently it is not a concern- this is just part of being human and the emotions many help us make different choices or decisions. However, when these toxic emotions are a part of our daily lives they can have harmful effects on the heart.

Dr. Christine Nezu, co-author of The Emotional Wellness Way to

### Cardiac Health: How Letting Go of Depression, Anxiety and Anger Can Heal Your Heart, says,

“Because negative emotions and heart disease are linked, and heart disease is the number one killer of Americans, why not take the opportunity to manage your emotions more effectively?” She further explains that a healthy emotional state has positive effects on the heart and is just as crucial for your health and well being as nutrition and exercise.

How can you manage your emotions? 1) Try to turn negative feelings into positive ones – learning to forgive is very important for those who have problems with anger. 2) For sadness, try to cultivate feelings of joy and gratitude by doing for others and being intentional in saying “thank you” to someone every day. 3) For anxiety, try relaxation tapes, visualizations or take an exercise class like Yoga or Pilates to help you to focus on your breathing. 4) Seek help from your physician, a social worker or family therapist. Sometimes medication and/or behavioral therapy can transform toxic emotions into positive growth.

We can't deny our emotions but we can have control over them before they have negative

consequences on our heart health.

Dr. Nezu says that we need to realize it is OK to let go of anger. “It is a myth that letting go of anger makes a person weak or vulnerable to others. In fact the opposite is true: The more you let go, the less control people have over you because they are less able to push your buttons.”

Many individuals who are caregivers find themselves with overwhelming feelings that seem insurmountable. When they become involved in support groups and hear from others in the same situations, they can confront and work on their emotions.

At Eldercare Services, we have monthly support groups and classes to empower family members to help them deal with the emotions common to caregiving in “heart healthy ways.”

### **Healthy Heart List**

1. Forgive Others & Yourself
2. Create Your Own Joy
3. Relax Through Exercise or Meditation
4. Talk to a Professional About Options



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## *Community Classes*

### Walnut Creek

#### **Dementia: Middle of the Road**

**Tuesday, February 10, 2009 from 6 to 8:30 PM**

#### **Preparing for Positive Long Lives**

**Saturday, March 7, 2009 from 9:30 AM to Noon**

#### **Caring for an Aging Family Member**

**Friday, March 13, 2009 from 9 AM to 3PM**

#### **Dementia– In the Thick of It**

**Friday, April 17, 2009 from 9 to 11:30 AM**

#### **Families Dealing with Dementia**

**Friday, May 15, 2009 from 9 AM to Noon**

**Class Registration: Please call at least 3 days ahead**

## *Support Groups*

When concerns for aging family members are part of every day life, or when they interfere with work, your health or other relationships, you need to join a support group.

#### **Caring for An Aging Family Member**

**2nd Thursday of every month from 7 to 8:30 PM**

1808 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94595

**1st Tuesday of every month from 6 to 7:30 PM**

605 A Chenery St., San Francisco, CA 94131

**Cost for Support Groups and Classes: None**

**Support Group Registration: Not required**

For more information regarding classes and support groups, please call (925) 937-2018, (415) 469-8300 or email us at

**info@EldercareAnswers.com**

Eldercare Services has offices in Marin, San Francisco and Walnut Creek, CA.

Visit us on the web at <http://www.EldercareAnswers.com> for more information.