



## Progressive Illness - Is “Joy” Possible After the Diagnosis

### May Affirmation:

*“I am free of all stress in this moment. I look for joy in every day.”*

Bang! Wow! Why us? - Once given a diagnosis such as Multiple Sclerosis, Alzheimer’s or Parkinson’s disease, for example, individuals and their partners are often overwhelmed with feelings of disbelief, denial, anger and depression. Sometimes the symptoms of what brought the person in for the diagnosis has already conjured up some of the emotions, but once it is “labeled,” it seems like your life has been colored with a “dark crayon.”

Many clinicians and physicians are very kind while giving this diagnosis and often try to instill hope – but at that very instant, many individuals can’t hear everything the medical team is telling them. The patient may take the information and schedule a follow-up appointment yet leave feeling a little stunned or in complete denial and want to find another medical opinion - which is fine and a normal reaction. Once you have time and some distance from that first

shock of a “progressive illness” diagnosis, you start to gain some perspective and early in the journey most people want to do some planning for the future.

We have created a two-hour class for couples, partners or the person with the illness along with a close friend or family member. The class is for those in the very early stages of the illness – not for later stage individuals who may be confused and/or restless.

We want to be respectful of both partners’ needs and answer questions in ways that will settle any anxieties. This class will be given three times in 2014 – attending once should be sufficient.

The goal of this class is to invigorate and emphasize that “joy” is still a very real part of this journey – despite an illness with a long trajectory.

**Below are five important areas that families will need to understand and plan for so that they can find joy and prevent additional illnesses that could be brought on by stress.**

**1) Advocacy:** Each person with a “progressive illness” needs to have advocates. These will be the people you have as agents on your Advance Health Directives. You need everyone in your family to understand that your advocate is your trusted person for when you can’t make decisions and that the advocate(s) knows all of your wishes (that is the important part).

Providing families with Care Management, Home Care Services, Advocacy, Counseling, Support Groups, and Education since 1989.

Visit us on the web at [www.EldercareAnswers.com](http://www.EldercareAnswers.com) for more information.



**2) Information:** You and your family need to understand the illness and read credible information suggested by your medical team – not random information found on the internet.

**3) Legal and Financial:** You most likely need to visit your attorney for any necessary changes to legal documents and your financial planner to help you plan for any costs associated with long term care. These visits should also help you understand any entitlements you might have to assist with long term care costs.

**4) Support:** Support groups are important to both parties – this is often where you hear about new approaches to an illness, helpful tips on living with such an illness and how to laugh and enjoy your lives.

**5) Lifestyle:** Nutrition, exercise, stress reduction and mindfulness might be new to all involved, but will be of high importance when traveling on a long and winding journey with a “progressive illness.”

The class, The Holistic Approach to Managing Progressive Illnesses, will expose you to all of the above and alert you about things you need to

take care of. It should give you “hope” for joy and “light colored crayons” for the rest of your journey.

In addition, you will learn not only how to manage your emotions, but most of all you will learn that you and your family member with the illness are individuals-you are not “the illness.” Your life can be centered on joy and not despair – especially when you take care of all the little details in the beginning.

**At Eldercare Services,** we’re constantly refreshing through both new technologies and knowledge, to better serve our clients. Last year, we freshened up our logo and earned a Gold Seal of Accreditation signifying our commitment to high quality care. Now, in celebration of our 25 years of caring, I’m proud to announce a **fresh new look to our monthly educational newsletter!**



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

## Upcoming Events

### MONTHLY SUPPORT GROUPS

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

Addressing the fears of Alzheimer’s disease and other issues associated with aging.

##### **Walnut Creek Group**

2nd Thurs of every month, 6–7:30 pm  
Eldercare Services, Walnut Creek

##### **San Francisco Group**

1st Thurs of every month, 5:30–7 pm  
Calvary Presbyterian Church, San Francisco

No registration necessary\*

### COMMUNITY CLASS

#### **New Diagnosis?**

Do you or someone you love have Alzheimer’s, Multiple Sclerosis, or Parkinson’s disease?

#### **The Holistic Approach to Managing a Progressive Illness**

A workshop to help you manage a progressive illness, and learn the answers to your questions

Wednesday, May 21, 2014, 5:30 pm–7:30 pm

#### **Eldercare Services, Walnut Creek**

\$10 individual \$15 couple or 2nd family member  
*Advanced registration required.* Call 866 760 1808.