



THIS MONTH

May 2018

## Progressive Illness: Tips for Finding Joy Despite Challenges

Often a diagnosis of a progressive illness first arrives to us via our medical providers; our first reaction could be shock or confusion. It is hard to hear much of what is told to you about options and treatments because human nature seems to go initially to disbelief or denial and, after a short time, proceeds to anger and depression. Without some interventions and planning, you could stay stuck in that latter stage.

If you stay in that state, it will reduce your capacity to enjoy the moment and it will color your life with a dark shadow that will prevent you from living fully and with “gusto.” What I hope to do in this article is to bring four major areas to your attention and thus free you to be more than your illness.

The rationale behind the following four tips is that they will free you from many of your worries – worry is the thief of joy!

### **Tip #1. Build Yourself a Team of “Experts” and “Advocates.” Be sure to include:**

- ▶ A primary care physician who is attuned and connected to all your specialists. This team should also have a nurse and/or medical social worker.
- ▶ An Elder Law or Estate Planning Attorney – that can guide with appropriate legal tools that put your values in full view as well as helps you qualify for any entitlements to cover the cost of care.
- ▶ A Professional Navigator – often called a Certified Care Manager or Aging Life Care Expert to help you plan for the short or long course of your illness with a focus on the quality of life. See 2) below for more detailed information.
- ▶ A Financial Adviser who can take the information from the Care Manager and help you plan appropriately for the cost of each stage of your journey.

### About our Founder



Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC is a Licensed Family Therapist and Certified Care Manager. She has been practicing professional care management (now

called aging life care) since 1984. Linda founded Eldercare Services, a full-service care management and home care company in 1989, which now employs over 200 caring people. Eldercare Services has been providing Bay Area families with care management, home care services (caregiving), advocacy, counseling, support groups and education for 28 years.

### MONTHLY AFFIRMATION

**“Joy is attainable every day – I practice gratitude in a period of mindfulness every day!”**

- ▶ An Advocate – usually a close family member or friend that can articulate your wishes when you can't.

### **Tip #2. Find a Professional Navigator.**

You are the captain of your ship, but without a proper navigator, you can get lost or misdirected. A professional Care Manager (CM) who has the qualifications, education, and certifications will be able to put together a life plan for you with steps to take now. The CM will research future care needs, advocate for you along with your family advocate in a crisis – helping everybody to ask the right questions.

This plan could include everything from a home renovation to hiring care providers or personal trainers, finding local programs to support your independent living and, if needed, assistance in finding a supportive retirement living situation. Quality of life based on your values is the guiding rule for these professionals.

### **Tip #3. Maintain a Healthy Diet and Exercise.**

If possible and with the consultation of your medical provider explore ways you can get thirty minutes a day of exercise. If you can do more on alternating days, try to do some weight training and balance exercises as well. Exercise is the #1 contributor to health and wellness.

Your diagnosis could dictate your diet. Try not to eat a diet of processed foods. Eat only organic fruits and veggies and at least six kinds a day. Good fats like nuts, olive oil, and avocados are essential for your health. If you eat meats and eggs, try to find free range organic – non-caged meats/eggs. Find ocean fresh catch omega 3 rich fish at your local grocery store. Check in with your medical provider or ask for a referral to a nutritionist.


### **Tip #4. Start (or increase) a Mindfulness Practice and Stay Engaged With the World Around You.**

Recent scientific and medical research supports the power of mindfulness in maintaining health. These activities can be everything from yoga to meditative retreats. But you don't need to do anything fancy to practice mindfulness. Spending time in nature, listening to calming music with no distractions, or coloring in a coloring book are great examples of ways to be in the present moment. Whatever you do, just do it regularly. Start slow and work your way up to 30 or 60 minutes a day.

Design a lifestyle that promotes wellness. When you have an illness without a cure, you learn to live with it -- but if you design a lifestyle that promotes wellness, it improves the quality of your life. Build that team, find a navigator, an advocate and trusted experts. Once you do, you're free to work on bringing more joy into your day.

## **Upcoming Events**

### **Brain Remodeling - Learn to Improve Your Brain Health!**


 May 15<sup>th</sup> ⌚ 10:30pm – 12:00pm

**Presented by:** Linda Fodrini-Johnson MA, MFT, CMC

- ▶ Up-to-date brain research
- ▶ Minor lifestyle and diet changes
- ▶ Simple ways to improve & repair chromosomes
- ▶ Exercises to jumpstart your Brain Health journey

Limited seating, please visit <https://eldercareanswers.com/event/brain-remodeling-learn-to-improve-your-brain-health/> to register.

### **The Elusive Thing Called Sleep**

 May 18<sup>th</sup> ⌚ 2:00pm – 3:30pm


**Presented by:** Linda Fodrini-Johnson MA, MFT, CMC

Changes in sleep patterns? What's keeping older adults awake?

- ▶ What needs to be aligned to sleep well?
- ▶ Techniques for a better nights sleep
- ▶ Understanding medical issues that can impact your sleep
- ▶ Learn healthy sleep tips

Registration is required. Please call (925) 937-2018 or visit <https://eldercareanswers.com/event/that-elusive-thing-called-sleep/>

### **Dementia – The Road Map From Diagnosis to Care**

 May 23<sup>rd</sup> ⌚ 5:30pm – 7:30pm

**Presented by:** Linda Fodrini-Johnson MA, MFT, CMC

What you need to know, what you need to plan, and what you and your family can do when faced with the challenges of dementia

- ▶ What is dementia? Where is it diagnosed?
- ▶ Understanding the progression
- ▶ What does a family need to do to prepare for the journey?
- ▶ Protecting dignity and reducing stress in all family members

Class intended for family caregivers or those dealing with the challenges of aging. No fee. <https://eldercareanswers.com/registration-45/>

## **Location of Events:**

Eldercare Services, 1808 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek, CA 94595