



September 2014

Toll-free: (866) 760-1808

Website: www.EldercareAnswers.com

NEWSLETTER

ABOUT OUR FOUNDER

Linda is a Licensed Family Therapist and Certified Care Manager. She has been a Professional Care Manager since 1984 and in 1989, she founded Eldercare Services in Walnut Creek, California. Now a full-service care management and home care company that employs highly-skilled Professional Certified Care Managers and over 250 employees, Eldercare Services has been providing San Francisco Bay Area families with Care Management, Home Care Service, advocacy, counseling, support groups and education for over 25 years.

Linda Fodrini-Johnson
MA, MFT, CMC
Founder &
Executive Director



“Dad has Alzheimer’s – How do I handle his repeated questions?”

“What time are we going to have dinner?”

Dad asked me that question 10 times in about 20 minutes and I don’t think my voice was very kind when I answered him the last two times. What am I supposed to do about his repetitive behavior? How can I avoid feeling frustrated with Dad? What can I do differently?

Dementia

One of the first signs of dementia, including Alzheimer’s disease, is memory loss in the form of Recent Memory - forgetting those things that just happened. Not to be confused with typical signs of aging – like misplacing the car keys or missing a bill payment occasionally – symptoms of dementia are severe enough to disrupt daily life and may cause considerable anxiety and confusion.

It is good for us, the “family caregivers,” to recognize that the illness has affected the part of the brain responsible for memory: the hippocampus. Forgetting a conversation from moments ago or engaging in repetitive behavior is not a sign of inattention or indifference – it is simply a part of the illness.

Detective Work

I recommend that you become a little bit of a detective and investigate these repetitive questions or actions. Look for the “reason,” “emotion,” “environment”, and general “health” factors that might reveal more about the repetitive behavior in order to find an appropriate way to respond.

REASON A person with dementia may ask the same question over and over again, but the most obvious answer is not often what she or he really needs to hear. Behind the question, “What day is Betty going to visit?” may hide a worry that “I won’t be ready or have what I need for her.” The individual with dementia is looking for security that everything is going to be ok. Instead of saying, “Betty is going to visit on September 14,” you might want to say something like, “No need to worry, Dad – I’ll let you know the day before she arrives.”

EMOTION Try to discover what the person is feeling. Be aware of body language, eye contact and the words he or she is using. For example, instead of responding with the time dinner will be served (if you sense worry or even hunger), focus on an activity that brings comfort. Say something like, “Dad, you can help me with the salad and have a few carrots as I am finishing up.”

ENVIRONMENT It could be as simple as a new piece of furniture or the arrival of a family member – even minor changes in a routine or setting can be especially stressful for a person with dementia. Focus on familiar items; looking through a photo album or playing a favorite song can help reduce environmental anxiety.

HEALTH New behaviors accompanied by anxiety – like pacing, walking in circles, or the inability to sit still – could signal an infection or illness. If you notice a sudden change in the behavior of someone with dementia, bring it to the attention of your physician immediately. Distraction becomes our friend – have lots of tricks or diversions planned based on the family member's past likes and interests.

The real issues are most often comfort and security. Spend time reassuring with simple statements such as, "I am always close by, Mom." Try not to correct statements like "I see you have a new sofa" with "Oh, Dad we have had that for 20 years" – instead, say: "Yes, do you like it?"

Imagine for yourself what it must be like to not remember much about yesterday and how scared you might be that you are forgetting something important. This type of behavior tends to diminish over time, but you must still be a detective and base your responses on energy levels and body language.

Dementia brings many challenges but also provides opportunities to share the moment with joy and love. The good news is that there are plenty of resources available to help you, your family, and your loved one with dementia. I will be hosting two free classes at our Eldercare Services location in Walnut Creek this Fall for those dealing with challenging behaviors. The events fill up quickly – so please call 866.760.1808 to register. You are not alone and there is some light and laughter along the journey!

One of the other options we have for families dealing with changing – and oftentimes challenging – behaviors is to have one of our expert Professional Care Managers meet with families once a month in a creative problem-solving session. Call Eldercare Services at 866.760.1808 and ask for a meeting with a Dementia expert. We can meet at your home or in our office. An hour with a professional for this type of coaching can save your health and marriage!



Dementia: Understanding Behaviors & Finding Solutions

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2014
5:30 PM – 7:15 PM

- Overwhelmed by someone's possible dementia?
- Do you hear denial and resistance in every suggestion?
- Would you like to learn how to approach problems and get better results?
- Learn how small changes in your communication style or the environment can make big changes in behaviors.

No Fee. Advanced registration required.

Class intended for family caregivers or those dealing with the challenges of aging.

Dementia Education Series

Join Linda Fodrini-Johnson as she discusses 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.

Location:

ELDERCARE SERVICES

1808 Tice Valley Blvd.

Walnut Creek, CA 94596

Dementia Road Map: From Diagnosis to Family Care

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2014
5:30 PM – 7:15 PM

- 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

No Fee. Advanced registration required.

Class intended for family caregivers or those dealing with the challenges of aging.

To register for classes, call:

877.760.1808

or email:

info@eldercareanswers.com