



**Eldercare
Services**

EXPERTISE MATTERS

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Newsletter

October 2017

THIS MONTH

Spouses and Alzheimer's Disease: The Emotional Roller-coaster

Do you see changes in your spouse and do not want to say the word “dementia” for fear of what you might be facing? Is a friend not aware of the changes in his or her spouse? Are you an adult child and having a hard time suggesting something might be wrong with mom or dad?

November is National Alzheimer's month, so I decided to write about the challenges that well spouses face as they are confronted with the symptoms of memory loss or have just been given the diagnosis by a memory clinic. This reality is hard to accept if what you are seeing is this most dreaded disease for couples.

6 Steps to Facing the Challenge

1. What brings you joy and gives your life meaning? What is the answer to that same question for the person who has a dementia? You will need to be mindful of this question throughout the journey.

2. Diagnosis: If early in this process you want to obtain long-term care insurance or move to a continuing care retirement facility, then you want to make those changes at an appropriate time before a diagnosis.

Getting a diagnosis after you have made some other decisions would be your next step or could be your first step. Many other issues can present as a dementia like Alzheimer's, so you want to

Upcoming Event

Emergency Preparedness

 Oct. 20th  2:00pm – 3:30pm

Presented by: Mateika Martin, Division Safety Officer, CCC EMS

Join the Contra Costa Emergency Medical Services Safety Officer for this valuable workshop on Emergency Preparedness.

- Learn how to tailor the preparedness plan for yours or others' needs
- Be ready for emergency/disaster before, during, and after its occurrence
- How to equip those who live alone for emergencies

No fee, but advanced registration is required.

<https://eldercareanswers.com/registration-2/>

MONTHLY AFFIRMATION

**“I keep joy both in my life
and that of my spouse
every day. I can be in the
moment with my spouse.”**

CONTINUED 

rule out all reversal types of memory loss before proceeding in your planning. Knowing which type of dementia you are dealing with will dictate a lifestyle change or medication to help with activities of daily living.

3. Legal Planning: You will want to see an Elder Law or Estate Planning attorney early in this process so the well spouse can take over when appropriate and the spouse with the illness can articulate his or her wishes, wants and desires into the legal document when appropriate. Remember, you the well spouse, need a plan for the care of the ill spouse if something should happen to you.

4. Emotional Support: This is a very long and winding journey. If you are dealing with denial, depression, anger or sheer disappointment because the retirement you had envisioned is not going to play out as you intended, then you might consider seeking out a therapist with expertise in caregiver stress to guide you. Support groups are quite helpful for ideas as well as for emotional support.

Search out classes in the community that give you information about the disease and how to communicate with someone with this illness. Be informed regarding research, new medications and new behavioral interventions. Watch some Teepa Snow videos on YouTube.

5. Care Plan for the Spouse with the Illness: Social engagement should be high on your list of activities for the spouse with the memory loss issue. Continuing to do what he or she has always done for themselves is important – even if the person is slow at buttoning a shirt or blouse, don't take that activity away. Allow chores to be done that can be successfully accomplished. This brings a sense of self-esteem to the affected individual. Day programs are great resources and give the well spouse some downtime.

Heart-healthy diets and exercise should be a focus of both the well spouse and the spouse with the challenges. Studies increasing the right foods, eliminating bad fats, and increasing fruits and veggies along with exercise and social engagement have shown some improvements.

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.

6. Seek out the expertise of those with skills in giving directions, resources and a strategy to deal with wellness and behavioral changes. Staying at home is the best solution for some couples and moving to a retirement living center is better for others. Resources, behaviors and interests of both parties should be discussed with a neutral third party. I highly recommend a Professional Care Manager that has an advanced degree related to health and human services (nursing, social work, counseling, gerontology, etc.), is certified by a reputable testing organization and is a member of the National Association – called the “Aging Life Care Association.” These professionals will help you design a short and long-term plan and refer you to places and other professionals that are specific to your needs.

Two such resources are VillagePlan™ - www.VillagePlan.com and, of course, Eldercare Services - www.EldercareAnswers.com.

Eldercare has a staff of 10 professionals to help you with these decisions.