Early Alzheimer’s Support and Education Series

Classes developed by the Alzheimer’s Association are designed to empower individuals diagnosed with early Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias along with their family member(s), to become active participants in their care by educating about the disease as well as care and treatment options.

Participants should:
- Have completed a formal assessment and received a diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease or a related dementia.
- Be aware of their diagnosis, and be able to participate in the group.
- Want to participate.

For information on when the next class is available, please call Lynne Brownrigg at 321-434-7614, or email her at lynne.brownrigg@health-first.org

Changing Relationships After Diagnosis

Maintaining relationships with friends/family is crucial to health and quality of life after a diagnosis of any type of dementia or Mild Cognitive Impairment. It’s important to be prepared for relationships to change as the symptoms become more apparent. Friends may become uncomfortable with your diagnosis, as it stirs up fears about their own futures. Some may retreat for a while and reconnect once they have had time to adjust.

As your abilities change, there will be changes in your roles and responsibilities with family and friends. Family members may have conversations or make plans without your input. You may feel that friends exclude you from conversations. Others may have to take on responsibilities that were once yours, such as managing the finances, shopping, cooking or driving. You may find that those closest to you have good intentions, but may provide help that feels invasive or unnecessary at times. These situations can lead to feelings of isolation and even resentment toward those we love.

Both the care giver and the care recipient need to be alert to these issues. Communication is the key. Don’t assume your friends, family, or even your spouse knows how you want them to treat you. Be open about your feelings. Share your experience about the changes you are experiencing and be specific about how you would like to be treated. Let your friends know what activities you feel most comfortable doing and how you would like to share time together.

Learn how to ask for help. It can be difficult to do, but adapting to changes and accepting help from others can be a way to acknowledge their value in your life. Don’t forget to say thank you. Showing your gratitude can quickly reduce stress and tension in any relationship. Don’t dwell on people unable to support you at this time. Give them the time to adjust to your diagnosis. Try not to take their pulling away personally.

Remember that adjusting to change is a part of the aging experience for all of us.
What Every Caregiver Should Know About Alzheimer’s Research

It sometimes seems as though there is a revolutionary treatment, screening method, or new drug that is supposed to treat Alzheimer’s dementia discovered every other day. Much of the confusion and concern surrounding research findings stems from how a study is covered by the media. Reporters too often overdramatize study results, portraying them as being more important or impactful than they really are. After persuading a person to read a story, a reporter often tones down the initial shock of their headline with a series of facts and figures from the actual research report.

There are ways to tell whether a research study is relevant. Look for a few key pieces of information:

- **Is the study conducted on humans, animals, or in a test tube?** Unless the study is on humans, the discovery isn't likely to change how Alzheimer's is managed in the near future.
- **How many people are involved?** The results of a study with fewer than 30 people generally cannot be applied to a larger population.
- **Is there FDA approval?** A new drug or therapy that has garnered FDA approval should be considered pretty important.
- **Who's footing the bill?** The results of studies funded by private companies should be taken with a grain of salt. They may be valid, but the possibility for bias and excessive marketing may make a study seem more important than it actually is.

The Alzheimer's Association has a page on their website [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org) dedicated to dispelling myths. One thing is not in dispute; research has consistently showed that maintaining a healthy body is important to maintaining a healthy mind.

Research News

Through our relationship with Florida Institute of Technology School of Psychology, the Memory Disorder Clinic facilitates applied research projects to improve the care and clinical assessment of people with Alzheimer’s disease or related dementia. A recent study examined the impact of Vitamin D regarding cognition in the geriatric population. Archival participant data from the Memory Clinic/Health First Aging Services patients who provided consent were utilized for this study. Test scores from cognitive tests and from the Brief Neuropsychological Evaluations (BNE) were compared pre and post treatment of low Vitamin D levels.

The results of the study were mixed, indicating a positive correlation between Vitamin D levels and cognition, but, for those patients diagnosed with a vitamin D deficiency, adding the supplement did not improve cognition. Please keep in mind this was a small study and further research is warranted with a larger study sample.

In an article published on May 6, 2014, University of Florida researchers advise older adults who need to remember detailed written information: Don’t just read it, tell someone about it!

The UF study showed that older adults who read a text and then described what they had read to someone else remembered more details of the text than older adults who simply re-read the passage multiple times.

*The findings appear in the April issue of the journal Aphasiology.*
Prevention of Caregiver Crises: Taking care of yourself is one of the most important ways to be a healthy caregiver. As the disease progresses, new caregiving skills are necessary and challenges can be very demanding. Too much stress can be damaging to both a caregiver and the person with Alzheimer’s disease or other memory disorder. Become an educated caregiver. Presented by Pat DeAngelis, RN, on Friday, August 15th, from 10:30am to 12:00 noon, at the Center for Family Caregivers. To reserve a space, please call 321-434-7625.

Natural Disaster Awareness for Senior Caregivers: This 4 hour course is designed to enhance the caregiver’s awareness of vulnerability factors associated with senior citizens. Learn how to identify, prepare, and perform a number of support activities that will ensure the safety and security of senior citizens when a natural hazard event occurs. Presented on August 22nd from 9:00am to 1:00pm at the Center for Family Caregivers. For registration please contact Joyce Kennedy at 321-434-7625.

EASE Alumni: If you’ve attended the EASE series, please come to the monthly EASE Alumni group meeting offered in Melbourne on Wednesday, August 6th, from 2:00p.m. -3:30pm, at the Center for Family Caregivers on Babcock St.

Stress-Busting Alumni: Past participants in our Stress-Busting for Family Caregiver’s classes are invited to join us on Friday, August 1st, from 10:00am to 11:30am in the conference room on the second floor of the Aging Services/Memory Disorder Clinic in Melbourne.

Virtual Dementia Tour: A hands-on experience created for anyone seeking to understand the physical and mental challenges of those with Alzheimer's and other related dementias. Wednesday, August 13th from 3:00pm to 4:30pm at Joe’s Club on Wickham Rd. in Melbourne, you must call to reserve a space. Call Monday - Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm: (321) 253-4430.

UPCOMING CLASSES

Learning the Ropes - This new class that is being offered through the Memory Clinic was developed in Canada at Baycrest, a leader in providing innovations in aging and brain health. It’s designed for someone diagnosed with MCI and their partner to enhance healthy lifestyle behaviors and to provide strategies to manage changes associated with experiencing MCI. For more information please call Lynne at the Memory Clinic – (321) 434-7614.

At the Crossroads: Alzheimer’s Disease, Dementia, and Driving - One of the initial speed bumps as a family member caring for a person with Alzheimer’s disease or related dementia is how to address the issue of driving. Join us for this three week series based on the classes developed by The Hartford and implemented around the nation. This three class series is designed for the family care partner. Please plan to attend all three sessions – Sept 17, 24, and Oct 1st at the Health First Center for Family Caregivers – please call to RSVP – (321) 434-7625.
Support Groups

**Coping with Caregiving** - A support group that meets weekly on Wednesdays, from 10:30am to 11:30am at the Center for Family Caregivers, and focuses on successful strategies for coping with the concerns, feelings and responsibilities with being a caregiver. Facilitated by Jeanne Simpson, M.S.W. Respite is not available.

**Empowered Caregivers Support Group** – Meets every Thursday at 11am at the Center for Family Caregivers and allows caregivers who care for someone with memory loss to share their journey with those who understand what they’re going through. This group includes group discussions and education and is facilitated by Nick Wilson, MSW.

**Dementia Caregiver Support Group:** Meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday (August 6th and August 20th) of every month at 10:30am, at Sunflower House in Merritt Island. Facilitated by Sharon Ramsey. Respite is not available.

**Osceola Family Caregiver Support Group** – Meets on the second Friday of each month at 12:00 Noon, at the Osceola Council on Aging, in Kissimmee, FL. This month’s meeting is on Friday, August 8th. For more information, please call Lynne at 321-434-7614.

**LOCATION ADDRESSES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Address</th>
<th>Phone</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Memory Disorder Clinic</td>
<td>3661 S. Babcock St. (2nd Floor), Melbourne</td>
<td>(321) 434-7612</td>
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<tr>
<td>Center for Family Caregivers</td>
<td>3661 S. Babcock St., Melbourne</td>
<td>(321) 434-7625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sunflower House</td>
<td>777 E. Merritt Island Causeway, Merritt Island</td>
<td>(321) 452-4341</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe’s Club</td>
<td>4676 N. Wickham Rd., Melbourne</td>
<td>(321) 253-4430</td>
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<tr>
<td>Osceola Council on Aging</td>
<td>700 Generation Point, Kissimmee</td>
<td>(407) 846-8532</td>
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**BRAIN FUN!**

**Presidential Nicknames**

Name these Presidents:

1. Mr. Nice Guy
2. The King of Camelot
3. Poppy
4. Tippecanoe
5. Old Hickory
6. The Sage of Monticello
7. Old Rough and Ready
8. The Trust Buster (Hero of San Juan)
9. Old Kinderhook
10. The Schoolmaster