



PATHWAYS

A NEWSLETTER FOR AND BY PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

Fall 2011

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SEE HOW DICK MANAGES MEMORY LOSS

A number of years before Alzheimer's Disease became a part of Dick Bridgeman's life he devised a technique to record reminders of conversations, comments of others and impressions that came to him at work or in social settings that he continues to use.

"Why do I do this now? --my short term memory has become useless. I do it out of absolute necessity." Now diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease, Dick has expanded the use of his unique method to include a record of appointments, errands, necessary purchases, repairs and more. The interesting aspect of this activity is the method that Dick has perfected over the years and how it continues to provide support for him now that his memory is fading.



Dick says he uses a portable pocket-size digital recorder in any setting without embarrassment. Each recorded message is assigned a number i.e. 1, 2, 3, etc. The recorder screen contains which message number has been selected for playback and the total number of messages currently stored in the recorder. A triple A battery that powers the recorder lasts "a long time". When the battery runs low, a message appears on the screen that it is time to install a new battery.

At the end of each day, Dick listens to the recording and transcribes the information to blank business cards. He places the cards on the table next to his bed. In the morning after reviewing the information, he places the cards in the pocket of the shirt that he intends to use that day. "No big deal-they fit in my pocket-easy to handle". Dick then erases the previous day's recordings. After dealing with the message on the card, he disposes of it immediately. If, however, the job is not completed, that card is carried over to the next day.

The memory loss management doesn't stop there. Not all the cards go into Dick's pocket. Some are transferred to a MAJOR PROJECT BINDER that has dividers marked with tabs: URGENT & FUTURE. Housed in these sections are clear plastic pages which are divided into business card size sections.

Interview by B. Carlson, edited by D. Bridgeman



For information about this new program contact the Alzheimer's Association at the number below.

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Ice Cream Social & Band Concert – August 18th



30 plus members enjoyed an evening of ice cream, music and good conversation.



INSPIRATIONAL QUOTE

“Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day saying, “I will try again tomorrow.”

Mary Radmacher

To the right, members relax after a busy morning helping with preparations for the WALK TO END ALZHEIMER’S (October 1st) (The volunteers are Flo, Joyce, Bonnie and Linda)



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Being Centered

Psychological and emotional health is just as important as physical health. Dealing with grief and loss is an issue that most of us deal with, especially after diagnosis. And as our abilities change throughout the progression of the disease, we may continue to experience grief and loss. Learning how to live with and transform grief and loss are extremely important. We also need to minimize stress to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Be careful not to put yourself in situations where you will encounter stress, and keep your emotions in check. This will help in maintaining a level existence. If you cannot avoid stress, try to keep it short term if possible, and learn coping strategies that help you manage the stress in your life.



Things to consider to enhance psychological and emotional well-being:

Don't be ashamed of your disease, it is an illness the same as any other. As persons with memory loss, we need to teach others how to support us. Let people know you have dementia; often they will be more considerate and understanding. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

Accept your new reality and allow yourself time to grieve. Allow for emotional release. It is part of the grieving process and is healthy, as long as there is a balance between feeling down and being positive.

Keep a journal of your feelings.

"My husband was finishing my words, finishing my thoughts. I took him aside privately and said it wasn't helping. I said I know you are trying to help, but it's just making me mad, if I stumble around let me, it was only making me frustrated. Unless you tell a person, 'this is not helping me', they don't know. Inside I was really struggling, if you don't tell them – you have to speak how you feel."

----- early-stage group member,

Try to let things go and do not allow your emotions to fester inside you. End or minimize negative relationships. Do not worry about making mistakes and forgive yourself if you do.

Do things that allow you to feel a sense of purpose and contributing – even something small like peeling potatoes provides a sense of contributing and is an emotionally uplifting thing. It can also help you feel like a member of the family. Participate in meaningful leisure activities. Research demonstrates that older adults who participate in leisure activities are happier and more content, are more satisfied with their lives, and have lower levels of psychological distress, anxiety, depression, and negative emotions.

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Being Centered – Cont. from Previous Page:

Try to be the best you can and do something positive every day. Accept that the disease may cause you to say and do things that may not be appropriate sometimes – persons with dementia and family care partners need to be tolerant of those situations. Pets and children are very therapeutic. They give us love, don't judge us and know when we're having an off day. Avoid self-pity. Laugh and smile, give and receive hugs every day. Enjoy the little things that life has to offer. We cannot change what has already past, so focus on today, and don't worry about tomorrow because tomorrow has not yet come.

www.alzbc.org

Research Advances

from the Alzheimer's Association International Conference 2011

- New Reports Highlight Advances in Early Detection and Global Collaborations

- Researchers at the AAIC 2011 in Paris reported initial findings of characteristics of a group of older adults who have maintained normal cognitive functioning over time. The scientists reported that, in their study group, the most significant factors related to maintaining healthy cognition included low scores on measures of stress, anxiety, depression and trauma – despite participants' experiencing life-threatening illnesses, violence, or living with addicted parents and spouses. The investigators hypothesize that resilience in the face of distressing life events is likely related to positive coping styles and the personality trait of "conscientiousness."
- Findings from a survey by Alzheimer Europe and the Harvard School of Public Health of experiences with and attitudes about Alzheimer's disease, especially regarding diagnosis, in France, Germany, Poland, Spain and the U.S. It reveals that while people fear Alzheimer's second only to cancer, the overwhelming majority says they would go to the doctor or take a loved one for further evaluation if they saw symptoms of memory loss and confusion.
- Two other studies investigate new methods of early detection of Alzheimer's, tracking progression of the disease, identifying participants for research trials and measuring the impact of therapies. One study uses blood measurements for estimating the amount of a toxic substance known as beta amyloid deposited in the brain; the other study suggests that abnormal levels of certain proteins in cerebrospinal fluid (including beta amyloid) in people with mild cognitive impairment may indicate who will develop Alzheimer's within the next 10 years.

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ASSISTED LIVING-WHAT IT IS ALL ABOUT

By Flo Watson

Recently I visited a new Assisted Living complex (Highgate) in Prescott. I was interested in making this visit because it was advertised as having a “Memory Unit” especially for people with Alzheimer’s or other types of dementia and it is located close to where I live.

After enjoying tea and sandwiches we were taken on a tour of the entire complex of apartments, which includes a movie theater and spa. I particularly liked the looks of the spa with aroma-therapy!

The “Memory Unit” (Cottage) is located in a secure first floor wing. The apartments are different sizes and all have windows with landscaped views and space for storage. Some are private, some double and some two room suites share a bathroom. All bathrooms have safety equipment and space for wheelchairs. In the hallways outside each room is a shelved glass covered window that provides a place for residents to store and share fond memories. A large section in this unit includes a hobby area, comfy furniture, a dining section and an entrance to an enclosed garden. It all seems very nice and they say that lots of care is provided for those who need help with bathing, dressing and other personal needs.



Flo & Denis Wagner

I was also interested in the other section of the complex - the Manor. Since I am in the Early Stage of Alzheimer’s, they tell me that I could live there with my husband and still be able to spend time in the Memory Unit. If he was planning to play golf or be away for the day, I could spend time working on a hobby and sharing in other activities in the Memory Unit and return to our apartment with him when he comes back.

It is good to know that this Assisted Living complex and several others in Prescott provide “memory care”. It is important to plan for the future. I prefer to live at home with family support for now.

UP-COMING EVENTS

- November 16 Trip to Heritage Zoo & Pizza Lunch
- January Winter Potluck Party
- April Sharing Our Talents
- June Annual Reunion Picnic



For details, contact the Alzheimer’s Association at 771-9257

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION
DESERT SOUTHWEST CHAPTER
NORTHERN REGION

Our vision is a world without Alzheimer's

This newsletter is the product of the ideas and inspiration of several Prescott area Early Stage Group Graduates who decided to meet regularly. Out of our get-togethers developed an interest in sharing information and personal stories with others in Northern Arizona diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. Our purpose is to maintain our brains, enjoy a social opportunity, and provide a service by providing support and encouragement to others. In three yearly issues, we hope that you, the readers, will become a part of this sharing experience. We want to hear from you!

The content of this newsletter is provided for information purposes only and does not represent advice, endorsement or recommendations of any products by the Alzheimer's Association, Desert Southwest Chapter, or Northern Arizona Regional Office. The newsletter content is written or selected by people with dementia for people with dementia.

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The compassion to care
The leadership to conquer

the compassion to care, the leadership to conquer



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