



**California Central Coast Chapter**

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**800.272.3900**

alz.org/CaCentral

## Getting the Help You Need

The primary caregiver is often “on duty” 24/7 and has limited time off for a break. Spousal caregivers may feel like they should be able to handle the stress of being together constantly, after all they have been married for years. Adult children caregivers may be juggling work and children, or may be the sole family member responsible for their parent’s care. Most caregivers hold out as long as they can to provide care without professional help or using supportive resources, taking on the mantra of “I’ll just pull myself up by my bootstraps.”

Let’s cut to the chase and repeat after me: “I need help.” The fact is that the desire to be in control of life and to be independent, even in caregiving, has clouded our vision. Society has somehow linked weakness with this statement, yet it is crucial to providing quality care to a loved one with dementia.

Contrary to the stigma, help strengthens the caregiver and allows him to continue providing objective and compassionate care. Help can come in many forms, through a support group, an educational program or training, in home professional care or the division of responsibilities among family members. However, possibly the most beneficial form of help to a family caregiver comes through respite, or a



break.

One option to get this break that family caregivers frequently overlook is the option to use an adult day center. An adult day center is a safe, supervised environment for someone with dementia to be at during the day. These centers provide the caregiver with an opportunity for respite, the chance to be in their home without the person with dementia and the security of knowing that their loved one is being taken care of and safe. Centers offer the person with dementia the chance to get out of the house, to participate in activities and to be socially involved with people other than their primary caregiver.

Though this sounds like a great option, many caregivers are hesitant and object when it comes to using an adult day center for their loved ones. Here we’ll cover some of the most common concerns for families:

**Concern #1: My mom just isn’t a social person.**

Dementia compromises a person’s ability to initiate a task, to create a plan with follow through and to want to try new things. These are effects of the disease and are often present years before a diagnosis is made. This can make it difficult for family members to distinguish between mom’s “personality” and the dementia.

The fact is, every human is social by nature and desires other human contact. Not only does this connection with others meet emotional needs, but also it stimulates and forces our brains to engage in life. Social skills are often retained well into dementia, however, these are often hidden by the person’s inability to initiate and complete an activity on their own.

In addition, being around the same person all the time gets old, whether you have dementia or not. If the alternatives to using an adult day center are your loved one following you around the house all day, sitting staring out the

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## Helpful Resources

### Friendship Center

With two locations, offering a variety of day programs for adults affected with dementia and other disabilities. Open 8am to 5pm, Monday through Friday. Days and hours of attendance can be arranged to meet individual needs. Contact Program Director Susan Forkush for rates and services information at **(805) 969-0859**. Montecito: 89 Eucalyptus Lane Goleta: 820 N Fairview Ave [friendshipcentersb.org](http://friendshipcentersb.org)

### Solvang Friendship House

Offering the **Life Enrichment Day Care Program**, designed to provide social, personal hygiene management and health monitoring services to elderly who need supervised care in a safe place outside the home during the day. Day program hours are 7am to 7pm Monday through Friday and 9am to 5pm Saturdays.

[solvangfriendshiphouse.com](http://solvangfriendshiphouse.com)  
880 Friendship Lane  
Solvang, CA 93463  
**(805) 688-8748**

### Easy Lift Transportation

53 Cass Place  
Goleta, CA 93117-3138  
**(805) 681-1181**

### Help of Carpinteria

1069 Casitas Pass Road  
Carpinteria, CA 93013  
**(805) 684-0065**

window, watching TV she can't track, or doing nothing, then it probably doesn't matter what type of person your mom is — you could both benefit from using an adult day center.

### Concern #2: *My dad is too early in the disease process for something like that.*

If your loved one is to the point where you are concerned about leaving him home alone, or only can for a few hours, then it's time to look at using an adult day center. Adult day centers are best suited for the individual who can still carry on conversation to some extent and who can still participate in the activities around them. Families often believe that this will be a resource they will use later when their loved one doesn't know where or who they are. The reality is that at that time, it may be too late to use this amazing resource. Depending on the type

of day care license, centers may have limitations on whether they can accept someone who is incontinent, or requires assistance walking. However, Adult Day Health Care centers like the Santa Maria Wisdom Center, can continue to care for people with moderate to severe dementia or those with medical health concerns who require more assistance with their activities of daily living like toileting. *(Unfortunately, there are no Adult Day Health Care centers in South Santa Barbara County)*

### Concern #3: *My spouse wouldn't want to go.*

As with so many other issues related to dementia, it is likely that your spouse will never *want* to attend an adult day center if you asked them point blank. This is similar to how they may never *want* to quit driving, or have help come in or let you assist with dispensing their medications. The dementia affects their judgment, and they don't see the same complete picture of reality that you see. They may not recognize the need for such an activity for themselves, though it is obvious to you that they cannot be left home alone. This is where family caregivers often must take control and make the decision that is in the best interest of the person with dementia. Once you've made that decision to try an adult day center, then it's time to come up with the right pitch to get your loved

one to go.

### Concern #4: *We can't afford it.*

In this economic climate, everyone is concerned with costs, and many are going without the "extras" in life. While this idea makes sense, family caregivers having a break from their role should not be forfeited. While hiring a private caregiver can cost \$15 per hour, and a caregiver from an agency \$20–35 per hour, using an adult day center is a much more affordable option for the amount of respite provided. Most adult day centers have a set price per day, but if your loved one attends all the hours provided, the cost usually averages to about \$10 per hour. You should also inquire about sliding-scale fees and possible eligibility for services like respite grants and veterans benefits.



### Concern #5: *How would I get her there?*

On the central coast where there are limited day center resources and yet a broad geographical area, this can be difficult, however there are options. Of course taking and picking up your loved one may be an option for some. Though the drive one way could be up to 30 minutes depending on where you are in the county, it may be worth it for the person with limited financial options who needs respite. Some day centers provide transportation services. In Santa Barbara, Easy Lift Transportation and Help of Carpinteria provide point-to-point transportation at very low cost for seniors. Also, think outside the box – do you have a family member or friend who could take that on once or twice a week for you?

While there are many reasons caregivers initially hesitate to use an Adult Day Center, there are many more reasons why they should try it. It is undeniable that family caregivers need time off – time to themselves, to recharge and decompress. Persons with dementia also need time away, time to socialize and be stimulated. Adult day centers are a great option to meet both of these needs.

*Written by Jessica Mezzapesa, Care Consultant, Alzheimer's Association California Central Chapter.*