



California Central Coast Chapter

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alz.org/CaCentral

Finding Support When You Need It Most

Most people have never been to a support group. There may have never been a reason before to be a part of one. However, now that a loved one or yourself, is facing serious memory loss, the idea of dealing with this experience alone and without direction is frightening.

Persons with early stage memory loss may want to connect with others who are also on the same path, and caregivers often need to seek out information from others and share experiences. Both groups are seeking a refuge amid this sea of change; they are seeking a source of comfort, shelter and relief – a support group.

People experiencing early stage memory loss often feel alone and isolated by the disease. They may believe no one in their family understands, or are frustrated with the hand they've been dealt. They too may want to be a part of a group where they can share their experiences, ideas and emotions freely. It's this freedom that's found within a support group that is such a benefit to the attendee.

Caregivers usually have so



many questions. How do I stop Mom from driving? How do I get my wife a good diagnosis? When is it time to have full time care? How do I keep from being resentful? How do I cope with the guilt, and how do I grieve?

Many of these questions can be answered by professionals in the field, but many of them may be better answered by someone who has already gone through that experience. In a support group, there is a special kind of compassion and understanding that extends from one caregiver to another. That validation of emotions and personal experience is what draws people to support groups. In a support group, you are safe. You are where others understand and accept you, truly understanding your pain,

fears, frustrations and joys.

In a support group ideas are freely shared. Tips and tricks of the trade can make the difference between doing something the hard way or the easy way. Questions are posed and members chime in with strategies they've used or heard. This brainstorming of information exchanged is not only practical, but often it can help individuals change the perception of their own situation. Seeing that there is another way, that they can try something else or a new technique, knowing that others have also gone through it, provides a sense of positivity and of control – both of which are feelings that are so often lacking for those dealing with progressive dementia.

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alzheimer's  association®

Caregiver Tips



-  Take care of YOURSELF first!
-  Get some exercise.
-  Make sure you are getting enough sleep.
-  Eat healthy snacks and meals.
-  Make time for an activity you enjoy, such as reading, listening to music or going for a walk.
-  Keep up with your own medical check-ups and regular appointments.
-  Ask for help from family members, neighbors, community and friends.
-  Make list of concrete tasks people can help you with.
-  Connect with local service agencies - such as the Alzheimer's Association and the Coast Caregiver Resource Center
-  Join a support group.

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The Alzheimer's Association offers support groups throughout our region for caregivers of people with memory loss and for individuals with early stage dementia. We also have specialized Early Stage, evening and Adult Children of Aging Parents groups. The purpose of these groups to gather in a safe, supportive, caring and understanding environment to learn more about dementia and helpful resources. Attendees can share their caregiving experiences, wisdom and encouragement with one an-

other and freely express thoughts and feelings they otherwise may not be able to share with anyone. The goal of these groups is to provide a structured setting, a refuge, for people to connect with others and to help each other navigate through the sea of dementia.

For more information on the support groups that the Alzheimer's Association has to offer, please call (800) 272-3900 or visit our website at www.alz.org/CaCentral.

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

On-line Training for Dementia Caregivers:

Being a caregiver doesn't come with an instruction manual, but there are resources available to help. Use the trainings, workshops, books and DVDs available on the Alzheimer's Association website to gain caregiving skills and practical advice.

[Know the 10 Signs: Early Detection Matters](#)

Learn the 10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's disease, hear from people who have the disease, and find out how to recognize the signs in yourself and others.

[The Basics: Memory Loss, Dementia and Alzheimer's](#) - Learn about detection, causes, risk factors, stages and treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

[Legal and Financial Planning for Alzheimer's Disease](#)

The diagnosis of Alzheimer's makes planning for the future more important than ever. Through this interactive two-part program, you will learn about important legal and financial issues, how to put plans in place, and how to access resources near you.

[Living with Alzheimer's for People with Alzheimer's](#) - The diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease is life-changing and leads to many questions. In this three-part program, you will hear from others who have been where you are, and will learn what you need to know to navigate this chapter of your life.

[Living with Alzheimer's: For Caregivers](#) - In every stage of Alzheimer's disease, families face new questions as they adjust. This three-part program provides practical answers to the questions that arise in the early, moderate and late stages. You will hear caregivers and professionals discuss helpful strategies to provide safe, effective and comfortable care.

[Living with Alzheimer's for Younger-Onset Alzheimer's](#) - This program offers answers to questions about younger-onset Alzheimer's disease. Hear from those directly affected and learn how to ease the impact throughout the course of the disease.

Certification Training:

[essentiALZ™](#) - This online program offers individual training in dementia care, as well as individual certification by the Alzheimer's Association to recognize those who complete the program and demonstrate knowledge of quality dementia care practices. Both family members and professional care providers can benefit. There are two certification options:

- **essentiALZ:** This certification can be earned after taking the approved prerequisite training, CARES® Dementia Basics™ (4 hours of training) jointly developed by the Alzheimer's Association and HealthCare Interactive. Topics covered include the basics of Alzheimer's and dementia care, behavior, communication and person-centered care.
- **essentialALZ advanced:** This certification can be earned after taking the approved prerequisite training, CARES® Dementia Basics and Advanced Training™ (10 hours). The essentiALZ advanced certification exam covers basics of Alzheimer's and dementia care, behavior, communication, person-centered care, eating well, recognizing pain, minimizing falls, wandering and minimizing the use of restraints.

[CARES® Dementia Care for Families™](#) - This three-hour online training, offered by HealthCare interactive and jointly developed with the Alzheimer's Association, was developed for family members caring for a loved one with memory loss or dementia. This program offers many practical and invaluable strategies to common caregiving situations.

All Alzheimer's Association workshops and trainings are available on-line at:

alz.org/care/alzheimers-dementia-care-training-certification.asp