

California Central Coast Chapter

December 2022

A monthly newsletter for people caring for those affected by Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia.

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Treat me with Respect for my Age

By Carol Leish, MA

Ageism is too common in our society. Elders deserve our respect and admiration for who they are as individuals. Even if someone has memory issues or dementia, don't ignore them. They still have feelings and hopes and desires like the rest of us. And, with age, comes wisdom, which needs to be respected, too.

And, with age and experience, elders develop wisdom. Revere and be interested in what you can learn from your elders since they can teach you a lot through their experiences and accumulated wisdom.

I think of my Great-Aunt Flo, who lived in Florida, who had dementia for the last six years of her life. She passed away last year at the age of 102! However, out of love, respect, and admiration, for the last eight years of her life, I would call her every day or every other day. When I was asked by others, "Why are you calling her since she has dementia?" I'd answer by saying, "She's happy to hear my voice, and it makes me feel good that I'm talking to her, and respecting and loving her for who she is."

Just because she had dementia towards the end of her life doesn't mean that she should have been ignored. Giving people, even with



memory problems or dementia, attention is very important in order for them not to feel isolated or ignored. The beauty of being with people with memory problems or dementia is that they can teach us how to be in the moment, and to be able to appreciate the present vs. worrying over the past or becoming anxious about the future.

Thus, I count my blessings for my close relationship with Aunt Flo. I definitely have fond memories of her being in Florida, which I did go to visit one time. I also have fond memories of visiting her and my Great-Uncle Irv and my grandmother in New York City many times over the years. Visiting New York in September sometimes for my birthday made my visits extra special.

Count your blessings, too, about being able to be with family and friends during the holiday season. It's important to respect and accept all of your relatives and friends all the time. Spending time with others during the

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TIPS & TOOLS

Navigating the Holidays when a loved one has dementia

Adjust expectations

- » Talk with family beforehand about what you can realistically take on during the holidays. Maybe it's time to pass the torch on that big holiday meal?

Adapt gift giving

- » Provide a list of useful and enjoyable gifts for the person with dementia, such as ID bracelets or a subscription to wandering response service.

Involve the person living with dementia

- » Ask them to help prepare food, wrap presents, pack cookie tins, or set the table.
- » Let go of traditions that are now overwhelming and focus on what brings joy.

Attend our "Having the Hard Conversations during the Holidays" Workshop

**Tuesday, December 13th
10 - 11:30am**

Alzheimer's Association Office
1528 Chapala St, Suite 204
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Join us for a special one-day workshop where we craft an organized, personalized and compassionate 'script' to guide you through the tough conversations and situations that might come up over the holidays.

holiday season makes the time more special. Being able to reminisce with others brings more meaning to your background.

Knowing more about your parents and grandparents and friends background does add meaning to your life by enabling you to know more about your background. And, when you're with relatives or friends who are older than you, realize that they have stories to share about their backgrounds, even if they may have short-term memory problems. Long-term memory is more intact in people who may have problems with their memory.

Realize that reflecting upon holidays with others is a way to find out more about people's pasts. Appreciate others by listening to them and their stories about the past. By knowing more about the past, your present/future will become more enriched.

Cherish fond memories of those who are no longer with you. And, appreciate those relatives and friends that you still do have and respect and accept where they are, even if they have cognitive issues.

It's important to be able to treat others for who they are, not for who you think that they should be

Appreciate and respect all individuals, just like you would want to be respected for who you are. Revere those who are older than you, and realize that they have wisdom to share with us all.

Instead of ageism, have respect and admiration for your elders. You can learn many things from people of all ages, especially from those who are older than you, and want to share their wisdom. This will make it a kinder and better world for all of us.

And, by eradicating ageism, we will be able to be kinder to elders. They deserve this, even if they have cognitive issues. Through understanding and respect for elders, we can all learn how to get along better with each other, especially during the holiday season.

The holiday season is made more special by being with family and friends, and being able to share and reminisce about the past. By enjoying the present, and looking forward to the future, we can all appreciate each other more.

THANK YOU

to everyone who supported our Walks in San Luis Obispo, Santa Maria, Santa Barbara, West Ventura County and East Ventura County!

The commitment of our sponsors, volunteers and participants furthers the Alzheimer's Association mission to lead the way to end Alzheimer's and all other dementia — by accelerating global research, driving risk reduction and early detection, and maximizing quality care and support.