



In Care of You

A newsletter for Caregivers from Greene County Council on Aging

October 2022

Enter the reality of your loved one living with dementia

When a person has dementia, there are many things going on in various parts of the brain. A diseased and damaged brain may cause a person to not be oriented to time and place so they may not know what year it is or how old they are – they may think they are a young adult again. The disease can also cause hallucinations and/or delusions that do not make any sense to us but seem very real to the person living with dementia (PLWD) which can be frightening to them as well as anyone caring for them.

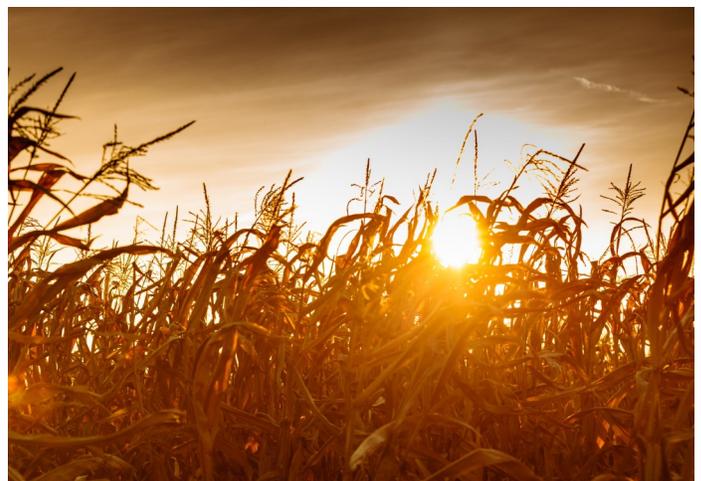
Many family members will react to this altered reality by trying to correct their loved one. Unfortunately, when family members try to reorient PLWD or correct their thinking, they often aren't successful because the PLWD isn't capable of understanding. The PLWD can't retain the facts about their surroundings because rational thinking and short-term memory are functions that have been damaged by dementia.

Correcting is not recommended especially in mid to later stages of disease. Caregivers and family members have to tread lightly and go with the flow – following their loved one in their reality. It is better to respond with kind words of caring and affirmation than to scold or correct. If a PLWD thinks they are a college student, then allow them to think that unless there is a concern for safety.

Give the PLWD textbooks or a brief case with papers if that helps them in the moment. Ask them what classes they are taking or what their favorite subject is or affirm their desire for higher education. It is hard enough to have dementia, but to be told throughout the day that they are wrong about themselves can wear them down. When children use their imagination or daydream, we don't correct them – we allow their fantasy as long as it is safe; we can do that with older adults living with dementia as well.

As with any difficult behavior that a PLWD demonstrates, it is best to be positive, caring, and respectful in our interactions. Sometimes we may have to distract a PLWD from an unsafe situation or be redirected to something that is more helpful. Ideally, we will try to understand the feelings behind their behavior or delusion and try to meet

Continued over





In Care of You

Providing support for those who support others

Reality of PLWD continued

the need associated with the feeling. When someone is seeking their mother, we meet them with kindness and assurance of a mother, instead of telling them that their mother died 30 years ago.

Something else to keep in mind is that Alzheimer's disease and other sorts of dementia are progressive, debilitating conditions. There is no harm in validating their experience and going along with their version of reality. If we don't, they may not trust us, or we may cause tension and hurt feelings. Entering their world allows for a more peaceful and purposeful day for the PLWD and the caregiver.

Credit: Carol Bradley Bursack, Minding Our Elders
Updated February 21, 2022

<https://www.agingcare.com/articles/validation-method-for-dementia-calming-or-condescending-166707.htm>

New Monthly Caregivers Support Group

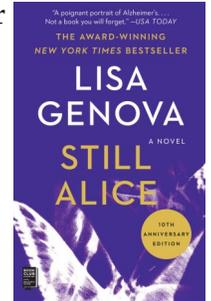
An evening support group in Yellow Springs has been added to the Caregivers groups facilitated by the Council. This group is held on the 1st Monday of each month from 6pm—7:30pm, at the First Presbyterian Church, 314 Xenia Ave, Yellow Springs

We hope you enjoy this publication, and welcome your comments and ideas for future issues.

Let us know if you no longer wish to receive this newsletter.

Recommended Reading & Watching

A compelling novel about a 50-year-old woman's sudden descent into early onset Alzheimer's disease, written by Lisa Genova, who holds a Ph. D in neuroscience from Harvard University. Fiercely independent, Alice struggles to maintain her lifestyle and live in the moment, even as her sense of self is being stripped away. In turns heartbreaking, inspiring and terrifying, *Still Alice* captures in remarkable detail what's it's like to literally lose your mind.



Still Alice by Lisa Genova

Still Alice, a movie starring Julianne Moore (Academy Award for Best Actress, 2015)

Available at Greene County Public Library, bookstores and online

GCCOA Resources for You

Support Groups

- 1st Monday of the month at 6pm, First Presbyterian Church, 314 Xenia Ave, Yellow Springs
- 1st Tuesday of month at 11:30 pm GCCOA Xenia office
- 2nd & 4th Tuesdays at 9:30 am, Peace Lutheran Church, 3530 Dayton-Xenia Rd, Beavercreek
- Online support group for October only will be on the 2nd Tuesday (Oct 11th), from 2:30 — 4pm. Contact us for information.

Weekly Radio Segment

Partners in Caregiving every Thursday soon after 6pm
WBZI—FM 100.3 AM 1500