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*The Newsletter from Family and Community Services
Banner Alzheimer's Institute
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May 2008: Volume 1, number 4*



Banner Alzheimer's Institute

May: The Month of Growth

As everything around us is bursting with blossoms and growing, it is time to assess your growth as a caregiver. While care giving can be tiring and stressful, it also teaches us new skills. Many caregivers have chosen the care journey and find a sense of pride in a job well-done. Almost all caregivers come away from the journey with new skills and a more positive perspective of their own value. The following are simple exercises to help you understand how much you have grown:

1. Choose two days over the next two weeks. For those days, write down everything you've done during the day no matter how small. Include things like chores, paying bills, care provided, questions answered, keeping family and friends informed, medications given, meals cooked, tempers soothed, and of course, activities. At the end of the two weeks look at all you've done in just two days! You will probably be surprised at how much you do. You may want to add to this list periodically.
2. From your list draw a circle around the things you never until you became a caregiver. You may never have paid the bills, administered medications, driven with your person in the passenger seat, or managed a behavioral problem. Now, stand in front of a mirror looking yourself in the eye and say out loud in a seriously proud voice: "I am PROUD because I've learned to (fill in your first item from the list here)" Repeat it for each item on the list and listen to yourself with all of your heart and mind. Say it again and again until you really believe it. Too many caregivers focus only on the things that haven't worked. It is time to forget the failures and celebrate out loud the good things you've accomplished.
3. Close your eyes. Imagine that your person is standing in front of you whole and healthy. Remember the love you had for each other and the admiration your person has felt for you. Now, imagine you are your loved one looking at you, feeling the admiration and pride they would have in all you've accomplished. Open your eyes and feel the love and pride you are sending yourself.

Don't you feel better? How much you have grown in the past year!

NEED A TOPIC??



“Ask the Expert”

by Geri Hall, PhD, ARNP

Dear Expert:

My wife is driving me crazy! She asks the same question over and over. I give her the answer but in a minute she asks it again. She seems so upset when this happens. What am I doing wrong? How can I make this stop? I think I may lose my mind.

Signed
“Exasperated!”

Dear Exasperated:

Repetitive questions are one of the hallmarks of moderate dementia. Several problems contribute to this:

The person has lost their sense of what to do next and ask repeatedly what they should do.

The person is asking about when something will occur and has lost their understanding of the concept of time. They are not sure exactly “when” tomorrow or next week is.

The person is anxious about changes they know are coming, such as a physician appointment or a visit from family members. In nursing homes people obsess similarly about mealtime, often standing at the dining room door for an hour before the doors open.

The person’s ability to communicate exactly what they want or need is compromised by the disease.

There are several ways to try to stem repetitive questions.

First and most important recognize that when your answer doesn’t satisfy, you are not getting at what the person wants to know. For example “What time is Mass?” “When are we going to the neighbors for cards?” Or the person calls the dentist about 15 times before coming in at the wrong time. Knowing that time is too abstract for the person. You can try asking a simple question: “Why are you asking?” The person will then answer what their concern is – often a statement indicating they don’t want to miss the event. Then you can answer the concerns rather than the question: “Don’t worry; I will get you there on time.” A hug can provide extra reassurance.

A second strategy is to try and distract to another activity “Come with me, I need your help!” Personally I have found this less helpful than the first response, but it works for some.

A third strategy is not to announce plans in advance so the person won’t worry. A fourth strategy is to write the answer on a file card and have the person put it in their pocket. When they ask again you can direct them to the card. Just make sure the card doesn’t reply with a time.

Repetitive questions can be frustrating. Just keep in mind that the person is as frightened and frustrated as you are.

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Beacon Bits

Did you know that there are resources?

Our Mission

To end Alzheimer’s disease without losing a generation, to set a new standard of care for patients and their families, and to forge a model of collaboration in biomedical research.