

## Greater Lynn Senior Services (GLSS): Conversations for Caring

Topic: *Alzheimer's Disease, Dementia, and Memory Loss*

Presenter: *Debby Segil, LICSW, Family Caregiver Support Specialist*

### 10 Caring Points

1. "The name of the author is the first to go / Followed obediently by the title, the plot / The heartbreaking conclusion, the entire novel / Which suddenly becomes one you have never read, never even heard of." (*Excerpted from Billy Collins' poem, "Forgetfulness," ll. 1-4*)
2. Our brain's ability to respond to everyday life seems so simple, so effortless. But countless numbers of unseen connections in the brain make it all possible. All these connections take place in the blink of an eye. But for persons with dementia, these connections are disrupted.
3. "Dementia is a term used to describe the symptoms of several diseases and conditions that cause people to lose their intellectual functions ... A person suffering from dementia may experience memory loss and changes in behavior – including changes in temperament, judgment, and interactions with others."
4. Alzheimer's Disease, the most common form of dementia, is a progressive brain disorder. Alzheimer's destroys brain cells causing memory loss and problems with thinking and behavior. While there is currently no cure for the disease, treatment for symptoms combined with the right services and support can make life better.
5. People can experience memory loss and confusion, however, and not have dementia. These symptoms can be caused by other conditions. So it is very important that anyone suspected of having dementia get a full geriatric assessment to clarify what's really going on.
6. Some early dementia detection signs: *Memory changes that disrupt daily life; Challenges in planning or solving problems; Difficulty completing familiar tasks; Confusion with time or place; Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships; New problems with words; Misplacing things and losing ability to retrace steps; Decreased or poor judgment; Withdrawal from work or social activities; Changes in mood and personality.*
7. Persons with dementia are often confused and anxious. And so the presence and care of other people can be very supportive and comforting. To be with someone with dementia in the present moment is a great gift, because for them the past is often forgotten and the future a frightening unknown.
8. Being able to communicate with a person with dementia is often challenging, but here are some helpful suggestions: *Speak slowly; use simple sentences; and maintain eye contact.*
- 9&10. The following table offers additional suggestions to support effective and caring communication:

<i>Try Never To</i>	<i>Instead</i>		<i>Try Never To</i>	<i>Instead</i>
Argue	Agree		"I told you"	Repeat
Reason	Divert		"You can't"	"Do what you can do"
Shame	Distract		Command or demand	Ask or model
Lecture	Reassure		Condescend	Encourage or Praise
"Remember"	Reminisce		Force	Reinforce

*These 10 Caring Points are intended to be a summary of best practices.  
For citations, references, and additional information,  
please contact Dan Collier at 781-586-8620 or [dcollier@glss.net](mailto:dcollier@glss.net)*

## Alzheimer's Disease, Dementia, and Memory Loss – Some Resources

### Area Agencies on Aging

The Commonwealth's Area Agencies on Aging are an important resource for families living with dementia. The Family Caregiver Support Programs specialize in this important work. The following are the contacts for these programs in the North Shore/Cape Ann area:

#### **Greater Lynn Senior Services** (*Lynn, Lynnfield, Nahant, Saugus, & Swampscott*)

- Deborah Segil, LICSW
- Phone: 781-586-8540 and Email: [dsegil@glss.net](mailto:dsegil@glss.net)

#### **North Shore Elder Services** (*Danvers, Marblehead, Middleton, Peabody, & Salem*)

- Kathy Perrella
- Phone: 978-750-4540 and Email: [kperrella@nselder.org](mailto:kperrella@nselder.org)

#### **Senior Care** (*Beverly, Essex, Gloucester, Hamilton, Ipswich, Manchester-by-the-Sea, Rockport, Topsfield, & Wenham*)

- Janet Girodat
- Phone: 978-281-1750, extension 394 and Email: [jayne.girodat@seniorcareinc.org](mailto:jayne.girodat@seniorcareinc.org)

### Web

#### Alzheimer's Association (*Massachusetts & New Hampshire Chapter*)

- <http://www.alz.org/manh/>

#### "Forgetfulness" (*Full Text of Billy Collins' Poem*)

- [http://www.billy-collins.com/2005/06/forgetfulness\\_b.html](http://www.billy-collins.com/2005/06/forgetfulness_b.html)

#### National Institute of Health (*Alzheimer's Disease Videos*)

- <http://nihseniorhealth.gov/videolist.html#alzheimersdisease>

### Books

Alzheimer's Disease: Health and Hope, Jo Huey (New Orleans: Alzheimer's Institute, 2008).

The Comfort of Home: Understanding Dementia & Alzheimer's Disease, Maria Meyer and Paula Derr (Portland: Care Trust, 2003).

Learning to Speak Alzheimer's, Joanne Koenig Coste (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2003).

Still Alice: A Novel, Lisa Genova (New York: Pocket, 2009).

### 10 Caring Points References

- Caring Point 3 excerpted from and Point 5 adapted from *The Comfort of Home*, page 2.
- Caring Point 4 adapted from [http://www.alz.org/alzheimers\\_disease\\_what\\_is\\_alzheimers.asp](http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_what_is_alzheimers.asp)
- Caring Point 6 adapted from [http://www.alz.org/alzheimers\\_disease\\_know\\_the\\_10\\_signs.asp](http://www.alz.org/alzheimers_disease_know_the_10_signs.asp)
- Caring Points 9&10 are adapted from "Ten Absolutes" © Huey 1996.

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