

The Year of You!

The holidays are over; decorations are down and family visitors have returned home. Holiday parties and social events have come to a halt and it is too chilly to spend much time outside. You may suffer a letdown from the holiday cheer that brightened December. January is a common time to feel blue or even trapped.

Caregivers, especially of people with moderate to advanced dementia, may face the New Year with anxiety and/or dread of another year of caregiving, wondering how they were chosen for this seemingly never-ending job. Some may find themselves angry at other non-caregiving family, wondering when “it’s their turn,” and then feel guilty for feeling this way. This is why January is a perfect time to reassess and make a few “resolutions” to make 2010 the year that celebrates you!

It is time to take a serious look at your needs and desires and then take positive steps to accomplish them. It is important to stop looking at the dementia as the center of the universe, instead of something to plan around. This means planning and doing things differently than before the illness affected your family. Some ideas include the following:

- Visiting with friends – Invite your close friends over for coffee and don’t expect your person to participate as in the past. Find a new bridge partner. Have a special activity planned for your person while you have your time off. One special caregiver we know hires a companion to take her husband bowling! Others may use an Adult Day Health Care program to accomplish this.
- Plan an outing – While your person with dementia may no longer enjoy an outing, you may gain a great deal from attending one, whether fishing, shopping, going to a ball game, casino, or spa. Try doing something you love but you know your loved one would not. This generally means going alone or with friends while your person stays with family or a respite provider. One trick to achieve this is to *simply plan it and not ask permission*. It is far easier to ask for forgiveness than permission.
- Attend a Support Group – Support Groups are a good place to meet and make new friends whose interests and needs are similar to your own. You may enjoy attending a GPS for Memory lecture at the Desert Botanical Gardens followed by a leisurely walk around the gardens. (See Beacon Bits)
- Plan a brief trip – Surely there is someone you want to visit for a few days. Ask family or an agency to provide supervision for your loved one while you leave town – or find a respite facility. You may even consider spending an occasional night alone at a local hotel.

Taking time for yourself and briefly disengaging from your caregiving duties you will help to rediscover yourself and maintain your health. While your person with dementia may not initially be pleased with your decision, each time you take off it will become easier.

Planning for Time Away

Schedule your outing with enough advanced planning to consider what your person will need while you are away. Then make a list of the best options to ensure that your person gets the help and companionship needed so you can relax and enjoy your time away from home. Outline the “usual daily schedule” if care is provided in the home.

When asking a friend, family member or volunteer to stay with your loved one, be specific about time that you will be gone. Tell them that you will have a schedule of activities outlined if they would like.

If using an In Home Care Agency, give yourself enough time to identify the “right” fit with a companion. Give the same schedule/activities to the companion to use and let your loved one know that the companion is there to help you out.

Adult Day Care is also another option. Most people do best when they get into the routine of going. Once this happens you are more likely to plan outings and appointments for yourself.

Short Stay Respite are more widely available at many Assisted Living Facilities. Some facilities will offer single night respite to several week long stays. Advanced planning will be necessary as health records, medications and TB skin testing are all required.



“Ask the Expert”

Mary Lou Hernandez

LCSW, Social Worker

What's New

GPS for Memory is a FREE 60-minute lecture on various aspects of Alzheimer's disease/dementia, caregiving and brain health. We will have various topics on a monthly basis, below are the dates and topics that will be discussed at future events. Registration is required and seating is limited, so call to register as soon as possible. The lecture participants are welcome to enjoy the lovely surroundings of the Desert Botanical Gardens free of charge. To help you better connect with nature, please wear comfortable shoes and light clothing, and bring a hat, sunscreen, and sunglasses. You are welcome to bring a water bottle, and the Garden has water fountains to refill them on the trails. Be sure to bring a camera to capture the memories and fun!

Date	Speaker	Topic
February 12	Dr. Pierre N. Tariot	Solutions for Challenging Behaviors
March 12	Barbara Tabach	Unlocking Your Memory Vault
April 9	Geri Hall PhD, ARNP, CNS, FAAN	Strategies for Successful Travel & Memory Loss

Please call Veronica Ellis at 602.839.6850 to register.

Beacon Bits

COMPASS is a free 90-minute class to discuss the progression of dementia and effective strategies to manage daily living. Enrolling for January 21, Thursday at 4PM class. The class is located on the 3rd Floor Conference Room at BAI. Registration is required, limited seating.

Finding Help is a free 90-minute class to help caregivers identify and plan for legal, financial and hands on assistance. Enrolling for Monday, January 25, at 10:00 a.m. class. The class is located on the 3rd Floor Conference Room at BAI. Registration is required, limited seating.

Arts Engagement Program is registering for programs at Phoenix Art Museum, Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art and Phoenix Symphony.

Please visit our new and updated website with all current events and class information www.banneralz.org.

Banner Alzheimer's Institute is now on Twitter, please follow us at [banneralzheimers](https://twitter.com/banneralzheimers). We will keep you posted with all current events and news updates on the fight against Alzheimer's disease.

For more information or to register, call Veronica Ellis at (602) 839-6850

Consider supporting the nonprofit mission of Banner Alzheimer's Institute by making a tax-deductable year-end gift or through a bequest in your will. A bequest can be in the form of cash or securities. For details, visit www.banneralz.org or call (602) 839-3851.

Dear Mary Lou:

My doctor has said that I need to enroll my husband in a Day Care program so I can get a break. However, I have visited the Day program closest to our home and I don't think he belongs there and I don't think that he will even agree to go! What should I do?

Signed: Need a Break

Dear Need a Break:

Adult Day Health Care (ADHC) programs are designed for adults to promote socialization and stimulation in a safe and structured environment. Most participants are middle aged and older adults with physical frailty and/or memory loss issues. It is very common for families and perspective participants to visit and form initial impressions that they don't fit into this environment. However, when participants get into the routine of attending, meet new friends, and find meaning through planned activities and outings, ADHC can be the highlight of the week.

I suggest that before you rule out ADHC as an option for your husband that you give it chance. There are numerous ADHC programs throughout the area and you may want to visit a couple of them before you decide which one you would like to try. I recommend that you attend with him for the first couple of

visits. Be sure that the staff gets a sense of who your husband is, along with his past/current interests. Your husband may enjoy helping staff with various activities at the program. Ideally your husband should attend three days a week for about 4-6 hours/day. Take advantage of transportation to and from ADHC as this will give him a renewed sense of independence, something often lacking in those with dementia. Have him attend for a full month before the two of you decide this is not the best option. Most caregivers find that after about a month of regular participation in ADHC, their loved one feels like he/she belongs and is part of the crowd.

Make sure not to argue or try to convince him of why he needs to attend. Let him know that you love him and are excited about him having more activity and being with or helping others. Don't feel guilty about needing time for yourself. You are his partner and he needs you more than ever to be healthy so that you can continue to provide the care and advocacy he needs. Be sure that you plan some fun outings for yourself each week to reconnect with friends, family or former interests/hobbies. Remember, this is a program that will benefit you as much as it will benefit him.

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.