



BAI Beacon

The Newsletter from Family and Community Services

www.banneralz.org • 602.839.6900 • July 2011 • Volume 4, Number 7

Avoiding Social Isolation

Learn how to survive and thrive when changes evolve in your loved one



A lovely couple retired to Arizona a number of years ago and recalled "the worth of our social portfolio was very high as each day of the week was booked with friends and various activities." However, when the wife was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease (AD) her husband revealed their social portfolio "crashed" as the phone stopped ringing

with invitations and they became more isolated. Unfortunately for many people with AD/related dementias and their caregivers, social isolation can become common.

Signs to Look For

Early in the disease process, the person affected with dementia may become easily overwhelmed in larger social situations or isolate themselves because he/she is aware of memory and/or language issues and doesn't want others to notice. Caregivers may hold back or sustain from usual social engagements trying to protect their loved one. As the disease progresses and losses become more profound, caregivers are likely to become more stressed and overwhelmed in the day to day care, let alone trying to orchestrate social activities in or beyond home.

While some former friends and family members may stop calling and making invitations, many caregivers put off returning calls from these well-wishers as time goes by. In fact, many family and friends often stop calling because they don't know how to effectively reach out and be of assistance. Over the years as family/friends have put out general statements such as, "let me know if I can do anything," "I'd be glad to come over and stay while you go out for a few hours," or "let's plan to get together for coffee." However, when the caregiver never accepts the offer(s), the offers likely come to a stop. In fact, most caregivers would welcome help if they knew how to ask for specific help and if they didn't see receiving help as a sign of failure!

How to Survive & Thrive

Studies have shown that the caregivers who seem to do the best are those who reach out to family members and friends to help them in the day to day as well as to stay connected socially. In addition, these caregivers think ahead about what kind of help they are going to need over time. It is rare to hear a caregiver say, "I got help too soon."

(Continued)

Ideas to Beat the Heat!

Programs for Participants and Caregivers

Attend **Circle of Friends Support Group** on Second Thursday of every month at BAI from 12:30 p.m. to 2 p.m. Bring your loved one to join in R.I.S.E. to Yoga (chair yoga) at the same time. Caregivers will gain new knowledge & support while dementia participants enjoy yoga. Info: 602-839-6850

With Art in Mind** Join our weekly art making program every Thursday from 10:30 a.m. to Noon. Participants enjoy exploring art while caregivers receive a guide of where to go out and about in the area. ***Please note our new time and location at the Children's Museum of Phoenix, 215 N 7th St. (Southeast corner of 7th Street and Van Buren).* Info: 602-839-6850

Monthly Jam Session: Dementia participants and caregivers enjoy singing, drumming and more! Meets the First Friday of each month from 10 to 11:30 a.m. at ASU Community Services Building, 200 E. Curry Road, Tempe. Registration: 602-839-6850

Banner Health
901 East Willetta Street
Phoenix, AZ 85006

Banner Alzheimer's Institute



Non-Profit Organ.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Phoenix, AZ
Permit No. 414

Living with a chronic condition like dementia means that the affected person and caregiver will need help – just as other people living with chronic conditions like cancer, etc. need help along the way. Early on, the person with dementia and care partner should sit down together and begin to list out how each can continue to meet their needs separately and together. For example, the person with dementia may want to ask friends to continue to include them in favorite activities and ask if they would be willing to drive. Care partners need to consider their own personal needs from staying connected with family and friends to keeping up with health maintenance activities including routine exercise and doctor's appointments. As things come up during the week and you find yourself asking, "I wish I had a hand with (activity)," make a list and record those simple tasks. Now when the phone rings and a family/friend asks, how they can help, you have a readymade list and can respond, "As a matter of fact, would you mind stopping at the dry cleaners,... or coming over for a visit next week while I go to my book club," etc.

Devising a plan early on to stay connected, learning to accept help from family and friends, and maintaining interests and activities will prevent unnecessary isolation.



Ask The Expert

Suzy Favaro, MSW
Social Worker



Dear Suzy:

My wife and I have always enjoyed spending time together while exploring new places, restaurants, and museums. However, her dementia is progressing and she is more resistant to trying new things or going out like we used to. When we do get out, we have a great time and she usually says, "We need to do this more!" Of course, getting her out of the house is a chore!

What advice do you have?

Signed:
Out and About

Dear Out and About:

Finding things you can still do together is so important and allows you to be the couple you have always been. By now you have probably learned that it is best not to ask her if she wants to go. Rather, telling her that you have "something fun planned today" and helping her to get prepared will likely be more successful. If she starts to resist while getting ready, gently remind her how the two of you love to spend time together.

Other things to consider:

- Make sure you plan the outings when your wife is well rested. We have learned for most people that outings between 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. usually work best.
- Try to keep your outing to about two hours. If she asks to leave, respect that wish and return home.
- Ask for a private docent lead tour at a museum as your wife is more likely to participate in the experience.
- Join in the Arts Engagement Program (*see sidebar*)
- Recreate the experience at home. For example, rent a DVD and watch a concert at home or order takeout from a favorite restaurant.

Celebrate the joy you find in the small things you do whether it be at home or outside the home. You are creating precious moments of joy for her and lasting memories for you!

Signed,
Suzy

Have a question?
To submit your question for future consideration email us at
bainfo@bannerhealth.com

GPS at Desert Botanical Gardens meets the Second Friday of each month at the gardens, 1201 N. Galvin Pkwy., Phoenix. Enter free to the gardens and join in the Refresh and Rejuvenate light exercise program at 10 a.m. and stay on for the lecture at 11 a.m. July 8 topic: "Driving & Dementia" with Dr. Roy Yaari. August 12 topic: "Enhancing Communication & Diffusing Arguments" with Helle Brand, PA and Jan Dougherty, RN. September 9 Topic: "Improving Oral and Dental Care." Registration: 602-839-6850

Ideas to Help Get Out and About in the Community

- Take a walk around the mall
- Visit one of the area's 42 museums (<http://phoenixaz.localguides.com>)
- Attend a daytime play
- Paint pottery at a local spot
- Meet a friend for a cool drink

Tip on Brain Health

The human brain is nurtured by social interaction and the mental stimulation through human connections. Research has consistently shown that humans who isolate and segregate have a higher risk of developing Alzheimer's disease.

Beacon Bits

Now enrolling for fall 2011 Memory Training Programs! We have sites scheduled in Mesa, West Valley and Fountain Hills. This 4-week program teaches a number of strategies to help people without dementia to improve their memory for names, faces, words and more!

Need to find help and figure out how to pay for it? Attend the next "Planning Ahead" class on Monday, August 8 from 10 to 11:30am.

Visit the BAI Website, www.banneralz.org for more information, call the BAI Events Line at 602-839-6850 or email Deidra.Colvin@bannerhealth.com

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.