



Banner Alzheimer's Institute

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Banner Alzheimer's Institute

BAI Beacon

*The Newsletter from Family and Community Services
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Beacon Bits (Continued)

Making Beautiful Holiday Music Together

BAI invites you to celebrate the season with community arts partner, the North Valley Chorale (NVC) for **Hallelujah!** This special holiday matinee features selections from Handel's Messiah, seasonal favorites and the always popular sing-a-long.

Hallelujah! is Sunday, December 8, 2013 at 3:00 p.m. at the Chaparral Christian Church, 6451 E. Shea Boulevard, Scottsdale, AZ.

NVC has donated 50 FREE TICKETS for BAI Family and Friends. Call 602-839-6850 to reserve free tickets while they last! Additional discounted tickets are available at 602-464-4100, just mention BAI for the special discount. You can also purchase tickets online at www.northvalleychorale.org.

About North Valley Chorale:

The North Valley Chorale (NVC), a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization, has been dubbed by local media as "the choir that cares." Since 2008, this volunteer ensemble of over 40 singers, ages 18-85, under the seasoned direction of Eleanor Johnson, has served the community by providing affordable, accessible and inspiring performances of choral music from many traditions, eras, and cultures.

Each year NVC performs three main concerts and multiple outreach performances throughout the Valley. During NVC's two-night Broadway Salute spring concert, attended by nearly 50 BAI patients, family and friends sponsored by NVC, BAI was welcomed as the group's newest community healing partner. NVC members regularly reach out to the community to share their gifts of music and resources with those who are lonely, ill, and homeless. NVC is a community arts partner of Banner Alzheimer Institute (BAI), UMOM shelters, the VA Medical Center, and valley senior centers. NVC has recorded two CDs, An American Tapestry and We Wish You Christmas, and is partnering with BAI to produce a special collection for 2014 release. Stay tuned! For more information, visit www.northvalleychorale.org

Brain Health Tip:

Capturing visual details keeps your neurons firing. Practice the 5 W's. Observe and report like a crime detective. Keep a "Who, What, Where, When, and Why" list of your daily experiences.

Beacon Bits

Memory Assistance and Planning Session (MAPS)

This full-day workshop assists families in the care of people with moderate to advanced dementia.

Tuesday, November 5, 8:30a.m. – 3:30p.m.

Visiting Angels Office
8502 East Princess Drive
Suite 260, Scottsdale.

\$40pp for BAI Family;
\$60pp non-BAI Family for instruction, materials, breakfast and lunch.
Call 602-839-6850 to register.

GPS Lecture:

When Will We Find Effective Treatment for Alzheimer's Disease?

Friday, November 8, 10:30 a.m. – noon
Banner Gateway Medical Center
1900 N Higley Road, Gilbert, AZ 85234
Free but registration is required.
Register, call (602) 230-CARE

COMPASS Class for Caregivers

90-minute introduction into dementia with practical tips for caregivers
Thursday, November 21, 10 – 11:30 a.m.
OR Monday, November 25, 4 – 5:30 p.m.
Banner Alzheimer's Institute
Third Floor Conference Room
901 E. Willetta Street, Phoenix.
Free but registration is required.
Call (602) 839-6850 to register.

COMPASS Class WEST VALLEY

Friday, November 22, 10:00– 11:30 a.m.
10515 W. Santa Fe Drive, Sun City.
Free but registration is required.
To register, call (602) 230-CARE

Breaking Bad News to the Person with Dementia

Despite your best efforts to create a calm supportive environment for your person with dementia, sometimes life gets in the way. Friends and family members have critical life issues, become ill or die, leaving you with the responsibility of deciding whether and what to tell your person. There are no hard and fast rules about disclosing information. The following are a summary of suggestions by the BAI Family and Community Services team to help you decide what to say and when.

First, you need to determine what the person with dementia is able to handle. Consider these:

- Does your person remember the individual with the problem? How do they relate to the person involved? Is the affected individual someone that the person with dementia has cared about, had a relationship with, or are they just a casual acquaintance? For example, breaking bad news about your daughter's in-laws, who your person has only met a few times, may not be essential; whereas, news about your son-in-law would be important to share.
- How long has it been since your person has seen that individual? Does he/she remember the individual with the tragedy or will you have to explain who the person was? If not, it may be best NOT to disclose the information.
- Will your person be able to understand a complex concept such as bankruptcy, foreclosure, divorce, weather-related tragedy, and so forth?
- How emotional does your person become when given bad news? Does he/she persevere or fixate on bad news?

Second, think about what it means to you to share bad news with your person. If one of your children becomes ill or has an accident, your person may not understand the implications; but he or she is still your partner and long-term confidant. Even though your person may not fully understand, sharing the bad news with him/her may give you a sense of peace. Your person may not remember what has

(Continued)

been shared, but you may feel better knowing that you did not keep it from him/her.

Third, how do you break the news? This takes some forethought and planning. When sharing the news, you or the designated family member must try to remain calm and focused. Plan to talk to your person during their best time of day; when he/she is more likely to “get it.” Turn off the television, radio, and/or cell phone in order to eliminate distractions. Sit next to your person and quietly share the most basic, need to know information. For example, you might share that a family member has cancer or is not expected to live, but do not share details of chemotherapy, surgery, and radiation.

Give your person time to absorb the information. Answer questions simply and honestly, much in the same way you would with a child. Keep the room quiet until your conversation is over. If the person has moderate dementia, don’t expect them to remember; and don’t start conversations with “I told you” or “you remember...” Expect repeated questions.

If you need to travel to visit or attend a funeral, do not start to plan a trip with your person or even ask simple questions such as, “Do you think we should fly tomorrow or Sunday?”, as it will likely create more distress or confusion as their ability to plan in these situations has become impaired. Rather, you and your family need to decide what the best course of action is and not discuss it with your person until the day of the trip. Refer to the BAI Travel Guide for important travel tips.

Finally, it is probably unrealistic to expect the person to acknowledge or empathize with your sorrow. By the time someone has moderate dementia, characterized by self-absorption, they are past the point of being able to recognize the hurt and sorrow their care partner or other family/friends may feel. Better to air your grief with a trusted confidant or family member who can listen and acknowledge your grief.

Bad things happen in life. It is perfectly reasonable to tell your person with dementia because it gives you peace of mind. However, modifications around the conversation in sharing bad news will make it easier for both you and your person.



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.

To make a gift in support of
Banner Alzheimer’s Institute, visit:
www.banneralz.org/waystogive
or call
602-747-4483.



Ask The Expert

Helle Brand, PA

Physician Assistant, Stead Family Memory Clinic

Dear Helle:

Our mother has had Alzheimer’s disease for the past 4 years. Dad has been her caregiver since the diagnosis. She still knows everyone and what is going on but doesn’t remember recent events or seem to plan ahead for things. Sometimes she will forget an important event or item, and other times she focuses on a particular topic and that is all she talks about. Sadly, our father has learned that his liver cancer has returned and has been given 3-6 months to live. Currently they live in their own home. We do know Mom will not be able to stay in their home alone when he is gone. I am hoping to convince Dad to move to an assisted living facility that Mom can easily transition to as needed, as well as being in a place that can help him with the care he will need.

Mom knows that Dad is sick, but we haven’t told her the details because she will not remember. As he progresses, we will have to tell her more. We really don’t know if she’ll forget Dad is dying and have to be retold over and over (something we don’t want to have to do), or if she will focus on it and nothing else. We don’t know if she’ll suddenly become much more confused (as she did when he was initially diagnosed 3 years ago), or take it in stride. But we expect things to change quickly as Dad’s disease progresses. What kind of a response might we expect from Mom and how can we best help her to cope with her loss?

Signed,

Jan and Mike

Dear Jan and Mike:

You are so much ahead of the game by doing some anticipatory planning, so I commend you for that. I am sorry that you have so much on your plate right now in terms of your Dad’s illness and Mom’s dementia. As hard as it may be, I would not talk about Dad’s dying with your Mom as she may become very upset and very vigilant towards him. I would just stick to the “Dad is sick” story, but only if she asks, and then just give a short reassuring answer like “we’re doing all we can.”

If your Mom has had Alzheimer’s for 4 years, chances are she is progressing to the moderate stage, during which reasoning becomes difficult, short term memory becomes more pronounced; and her ability to “cover up” for limitations is lost. Your Dad has probably compensated a lot for changes your mom has experienced, so with his death you are liable to see “decompensation” in your mom. That means she is liable to appear more confused, and you are likely to see more dysfunction. She definitely will not be able to remain home alone. Transitioning to an assisted living facility is a good idea, and you can use your Dad’s illness as a reason (“The doctor wants him to recover and you always take such good care of him so we will have you stay with him.”) Another option to consider is to hire a companion through a home care agency who can provide some socialization and distraction for your mom; help with light housekeeping, etc. Developing a relationship with that person can often help in transition to an assisted living facility as well.

When the time comes that your dad’s death is near or has happened, you will need to judge how your mom has done over the next few months in order to predict how she will handle dealing with death. It is hard for families to see sometimes when a person forgets that someone has died, or doesn’t talk about them. This can be a normal process for many because of the memory loss. In that case, we don’t keep reminding them that someone has died because that causes distress; rather, we reassure that “they’re okay wherever they are”. Some people are able to attend a funeral and can acknowledge grief, others can’t because they don’t understand; much like kids in that respect. Trust your gut ultimately, but don’t be afraid to reach out to us again if need be.

Lastly, make sure to get hospice care for your dad to manage his care needs and to provide support and counseling for your family. I hope these suggestions will be helpful as I hold you and your family in my thoughts.

Have a Question?

To submit your question for future consideration
email us at:
baiinfo@bannerhealth.com