Memory Cafe of the Red River Valley

Changing The Way We Think About Memory Loss

December, 2021

Hi Memory Cafe,

'I'm dreaming of a white Christmas, Just like the ones I used to know. Where the tree tops glisten, and children listen to hear sleigh bells in the snow.' Irving Berlin

Christmas is so nostalgic. The lovely sacred music and festive Christmas carols; delicious traditional meals of meatballs, mashed potatoes and lefse; date-filled cookies, cut out sugar cookies and almond roca; the Christmas tree decorated with ornaments from the past; and of course, the gathering of special family members and friends to celebrate the birth of the Christ child. Christmas reminds me of the people I love and Christmas' past. Sometimes I feel a bit homesick for earlier times when I was a young or when our children were still at home.

When you're thinking about Christmas' past it's tempting to create a starry-eyed version of Christmas and forget the pressures we frequently experience as we make preparations for this special time of year. Buying gifts, sending out the cards, getting the cooking and baking done, etc. can be very time consuming and stressful. This is especially true if you are a caregiver or someone living with difficult medical issues. Many of you reading this column find yourself in that situation.

If that's you, I encourage you to cut yourself a little slack this year. Focus on the essentials and let go of things that can be skipped. Ask for help. Take time to breathe. Be kind to yourself and make sure your self-talk is positive and life-giving.

I'm so grateful all of you and pray God's richest blessings on each of you and your family members during this Christmas season. Merry Christmas!

~Warmly,

Deb

December/January Meeting Schedule
All meetings held from 1 – 2:30 pm

Dec. 1st - Community Service Project - tying fleece blankets for children in need at Christmas. At Bethel.

Dec. 8th - Use and Overuse of Medications for Seniors, Dr. Robert Olson, MD/Psychiatry, Sanford Health and UND Medical School. At Hjemkomst Center. PLEASE BRING YOUR FAVORITE BROWNIE RECIPE! TO THIS MEETING!

Dec. 15th - Cozy Christmas Party!! At Bethel. Wear your favorite Cozy Sweater. Coach Jake from TNT will be there!

Dec. 22nd - Caregiver Cafe Support Group. Contact Karen at 701-781-4890

Dec. 29th - NO MEMORY CAFE. Happy Holidays!

Jan. 5th - Decluttering: Making Space for YOU! Beverly Benda. At Bethel.

Jan. 12th - Art and Music - Anna St. Amant, Best Friends Certified Master Trainer. At Hjemkomst Center.

Jan. 19th - Caregiver Burnout, Dr. Bess Turner, PhD Neuropsychology, Essentia Health & TNT Fitness! At Bethel

Jan. 26th - Caregiver Cafe Support Group . Contact Karen at 701-781-4890

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Mission Statement

The mission of Memory Cafe of the Red River Valley is to enhance the quality of life for individuals living with memory loss and their loved ones through socialization, education, the creative arts, community service and community engagement.

As many of us gather with family during the holidays Mark reminds us that life is difficult at times and families are imperfect. But we can still choose to "sparkle" with gratitude.

Family Extended
by
Mark Bratlie

Our family has extended
with care and with love
Like sunshine and rain
that come down from above

Good will is showered
on the young and the old
And laughter erupts
as old stories are told

Life's lessons are shared
with the young by the old
While youth teach their elders
to stay vibrant and bold

Though life's troubles still linger
with pain we must bear
The weight is made lighter
with family to share

And while perfection is absent
as rifts come and go
The presence of family
helps each person to grow

Our family reunions
are gifts of great worth
As the hours are filled
with smiles and mirth

So, let us all sparkle
and shout out with glee:
"We will always belong
to this great family!"

If you are someone with dementia, or supporting a person with dementia, remember they may have hurts and losses but consciously or unconsciously exacerbated with all the 'joy' of an occasion like Christmas, that is ripping up their heart inside, and making them seem more anxious, upset or angry.

They are grieving too, perhaps, for the loss of, and homesickness of a 'home' they can never return to.

~Kate Swaffer, dementia advocate living with dementia
~www.kateswaffer.com

"Still Here, Still Me"
Voices of Persons Living With Dementia

"Hi, I'm Mark. I have Alzheimer's Disease."
By Mark Clausen
Memory Cafe participant

When I was first diagnosed with dementia, I didn't want to tell anyone except immediate family. Like a lot of people with this diagnosis, I wanted to hide it as much as I could due to the stigma attached to it. I didn't want people to look at me or treat me differently. But in time, I decided to become more proactive in telling people about the disease and how it affects me. I am open to answering their questions and to show that I am the same person I was and still can do many things I have always done. I can also share about the things I struggle with, like short term memory and frustration with completing tasks I used to do so easily. In return, I discovered that most people continue to treat me with respect and are willing to extend support and patience when needed. This journey that I'm on feels lighter when it is a shared one and not one I'm traveling all alone.

My openness about my disease has also been beneficial to my wife, Teryl as she is free to talk with others about how this journey affects her and receive the support that she also needs.

Teryl's perspective

As any care partner soon learns after a diagnosis of dementia, there are many ups and downs along the way. There is a new learning curve about the disease itself, how it impacts our loved one, as well as learning how to do tasks our loved one used to do.There is also the emotional impact on us as we see the changes and the losses they bring. As Mark noted, he didn't want to share his diagnosis early on so I honored his request as best I could. But I personally felt the need to share this news with people I knew cared about me and what I was going through.

So as Mark began to open up to others about his dementia, I was also able to talk to and cry with other people and ask for their prayers for us both. The disease itself I didn't see as a burden, but having to keep it to myself was. God's Word tells us to share one another's burdens. He also promises that His grace is sufficient for each day. Both Mark and I know we don't walk this journey alone, but have the help of God and other people in our life in the good days and bad.

For Our Health
Hydrate Smartly
~Dr. Sanjay Gupta , MD
Keep Sharp, Build a Better Brain at Any Age

As we age, our ability to perceive thirst diminishes. This helps explain why dehydration is common in older people, and dehydration is a leading cause for admission to emergency rooms and hospitals for seniors. A good rule of thumb is that if you feel any thirst, you have already waited too long.

One of my mantras is "drink instead of eat." We often mistake hunger for thirst. Even moderate amounts of dehydration can sap your energy and your brain rhythm. Because our brains are not really that good at distinguishing thirst and hunger, if there is food around, we generally tend to eat. As a result, we walk around overstuffed and chronically dehydrated.

The link between hydration and cognitive ability and mood is well recognized. Dehydration often leads to cognitive problems in older folks, which can be assessed by examining changes in short-term memory, numerical ability, psychomotor functions, and sustained attention. Researchers have found that even moderate dehydration is associated with confusion, disorientation, and cognitive deficits. The degree which thinking skills are affected is dependent on the severity of dehydration, and the extent to which observed cognitive performance and neural activity are reversible with rehydration is a topic of on-going investigation. The lesson her is to stay hydrated, and the best way to do that is with water.

Mayo Clinic recommends men drink about 15.5 cups (3.7 liters) of fluids a day while women should consume about 11.5 cups (2.7 liters) of fluids a day . Good news! Your morning coffee and tea count toward the daily water recommendations.

Fill 'er up and DRINK, DRINK, DRINK!

Who says men can't, or won't make our community service blankets?? With Johnny Cash playing in the background Andy, Jim and Bob got a lot done, mostly a lot of wise-cracking boffola!

Just for Laughs!
Content Provided by Steve Froslie and Friends!

- What did one Christmas tree say to another? Lighten up!
- How do you know when Santa's around? You can always sense his presents.
- What was Santa's favorite subject in school? Chemis-tree!
- Why does Santa always enter through the chimney? Because it soots him.
- How much did Santa pay for his sleigh? Nothing, it was on the house!
- What's the difference between the Christmas alphabet and the ordinary alphabet? The Christmas alphabet has noel.
- What did Santa say when he stepped into a big puddle? It must have reindeer.

Lutefisk is to food as _____is to fun.

A. A lecture on toxic waste.
B. Solidary confinement
C. Pain and disfigurement

It was just before Christmas and the magistrate was in a happy mood. He asked the prisoner who was in the dock, 'What are you charged with?' The prisoner replied, 'Doing my Christmas shopping too early.' 'That's no crime', said the magistrate. 'Just how early were you doing this shopping?' 'Before the shop opened', answered the prisoner.

Darren remembers accompanying his father out shopping in the toy department of Hamleys one Christmas Eve. Dad said, 'What a marvellous train set. I'll buy it.' The girl behind the counter looked pleased and murmured, 'Great, I'm sure your son will really love it.' Dad replied with a glint in his eye, 'Maybe you're right. In that case I'll take two.'

It was Christmas Eve in at the meat counter and a woman was anxiously picking over the last few remaining turkeys in the hope of finding a large one. In desperation she called over a shop assistant and said, 'Excuse me. Do these turkeys get any bigger?' 'No, madam, 'he replied, 'they're all dead.'

QUOTE OF THE DAY
"When we recall Christmas past, we usually find that the simplest things - not the greatest occasion - give off the greatest glow of happiness."
~Bob Hope

Linger, Laugh and Learn Center
Room Sponsors

The Audrey Hermes family
Art Room Sponsor

Audrey

We are so grateful to the Audrey Hermes family for their generous donation and support of our new art room! Family members include Charlotte Hermes; Mary Jean Hermes; Carmen Hermes-Morohl; Anna, Adam, Laikyn and Addisyn Marohl. AJ Kyllo, a family friend also contributed generously. THANK YOU!

THANK YOU Major Donors!

Recent Major Gifts (over $5000)

Anonymous

Recent Major Gifts (over $1000)

Anonymous
Theresa and Gary Halvorson, Trilogy Real Estate
Cole papers
Dean and Mae Wieland - Sponsorship of our Open Houses and misc furnishings
John and Joyce Stende

THANK YOU for your amazing generosity!

The Judy Lundeen family
Theresa and Gary Halvorson, Trilogy Real Estate
Music Room Sponsor

Jane Sornsin Lundeen, or Ya-Ya, as her family lovingly called her, was the oldest of nine children. Her parents were the late Tom and Phylis Sornsin. Jane was a graduate of Fargo Shanley High School and later become a wife, to Dave Lundeen, and mother to three daughters (Theresa, Trisha and Jennifer). She was was over joyed to become a grandmother to six grandchildren (Hunter, Grace, Isaiah, Gabe, Levi and Ivy). She was a beloved member of the Fargo-Moorhead community and spent the later part of her career serving the Fargo's homeless population.

Throughout her life she often shared her love of music of all genres with her family and friends. She was the first in line to purchase tickets when there was a concert in town. She was often seen front and center at We Fest and she would travel to New York City to see her favorite Broadway shows.

Some of Jane's favorites included Elvis, Garth Brooks, Willy Nelson, Tina Turner, Cher and her beloved Luciano Pavarotti. As Jane's disease progressed, music played an even larger role in her life. It was through music that she was able to connect with her loved ones. She would often hum along, snap her fingers, raise her arms in dance or just sit and smile.

Jane would be so honored and thrilled to know that there is a quiet space in her honor for others to connect with their loved ones, as she did as her Alzheimer's progressed, through the wonders and beauty that music provides.

Some superheros don't wear capes or Santa Claus suits. They are called caregivers and they are angels on earth. Thank you to all our devoted and hard-working caregivers!

Memory Cafe Christmas Party

December 15
1:00-2:30
Bethel Church

Please wear your coziest sweater or favorite Christmas sweater. Bring a special ornament & be ready to share the story of why it's special or if you don't have an ornament, please prepare to share a favorite Christmas

Caring For Others: MEMORY CAFE BELL RINGERS!

Memory Cafe is dedicated to serving our community whenever and however we can! Thank you to all those who donated their time to ring bells for the Salvation Army during our designated time slot at West Acres! You made a difference!

Masking update: It is our goal to remain IN PERSON with you for our programming. We do NOT want to resume zoom meetings if at all possible! To achieve that goal, it is our expectation that you wear a mask during our meetings. We will provide masks for your added safety.We will also provide a "to go" snack on your way out the door instead of serving refreshments during the meetings. This policy will remain in place until the Covid infection rate falls to 5% or below.

Building Skills and Community

Memory Cafe Participants!
Exclusive Member Open House
Dec. 7th
10:00 - 11:30 am AND 1-3 pm
This Open House is for Memory Cafe participants and their families only!

Memory Cafe Day at Sandy's Donuts!
A SWEET and GOOY Success!

We are incredibly grateful to Mark Ostlund and Sandy's Donuts for sponsoring Memory Cafe on November 23rd. They donated $3 for each dozen donuts sold in ALL of their stores that day! THANK YOU Sandy's and all of you who purchased those exquisite delicacies to support Memory Cafe!

Christmas Concert!

All Memory Cafe participants are warmly invited to the Bethel's Christmas concert Dec 14th at 2pm!

Memory Cafe Awarded $2500 Grant from the Alex Stern Family Foundation

We are very grateful for the $2500 award we were recently granted by the Alex Stern Family Foundation. The funds will be applied to our on-going community outreach efforts which allow others to learn about the awesome work we do for the memory loss community. Thank you Alex Stern Foundation Board!

GRATIDÃO

As we deepen our reach and expand our reach and expand the services we offer we need your financial support even more than ever! Please consider making a generous end of year donation to MC!

"Memory Cafe is so warm and welcoming. The fun atmosphere makes you feel happy to be there. The quality programs and the useful resources makes you glad that you went." - Bob S.

Now Available!
QR Code for Paypal!

The FM Area Caring Catalog Season is Here!
Nov. 29th - Dec. 13th

FM Area Foundation's Annual Caring Catalog is an online giving campaign that offers charities the opportunity to raise $10,000! Your generosity to Memory Cafe will allow us to distribute first- rate educational materials, superb programming, and engaging creative art and community engagement opportunities at our new Linger, Laugh and Learn Center. This is a marvelous way for you to help us achieve our year end financial goals! **Special note: On Funday Mondays, Dec. 6th and 13th** for each donation each participating charity receives they'll be entered into a drawing to receive $1,000! **Let's Do This!**

On Dec 8th bring your favorite brownie recipe to our MC meeting at the Hjemkomst Center!

NDSU Social Media Partnership!

MC is incredibly grateful for the insights we gleaned from these fabulous NDSU students Kelli Fiechtner, Savannah Luccier and Ashlyn Schauer and their professor, Dr. Justin Walden! Thank you! Our skilled web designer, Sarah Russell-Harms participated in the presentation remotely.

"About 1122 "

~By John Stende, MC care partner

The building at 1122 1st Ave N has seen many changes throughout the years. In the 1950's it housed a dealership selling Studebaker automobiles. In the mid-1960's the Fargo School Board rented the facility and held auto shop classes for Central and North High School students in the former dealer's shop area. In the ensuing decades, it was remodeled, added to, and was a home for many entities.

It wasn't until 2021 that 1122 1st Ave North met it's highest calling: to be the Linger, Laugh, and Learn Center for the people served by the Memory Cafe.

"Your ideas for the LLL Center are wonderful! We want to support them with our generous donation. Thank you for all you do Memory Cafe!"

John with the two oil paintings he donated to the LLL

Communicating with Your Aging Parents
When Your Aging Parent Needs Help (Excerpted)
By Leslie Kernisan, MD, MPH

As you listen to your parent's take on things, be aware that what's driving him or her in this situation may not be the same thing that's driving you. Especially when there's conflict or resistance, realizing differences in your goals and motivations can help untangle sticky situation.

Safety is a huge, common point of conflict. Don't fall into the trap of assuming it should be your family's top concern. Adult children (and medical providers!) tend to prioritize staying safe, along with longevity. We want to prevent accidents, falls, injuries, illnesses, new medical problems, and dangers of any kind. We'd like our parents to live forever, or at least as long as possible. It might even seem wrong not to want a person to live as long as they can.

Most older adults, when faced with a trade-off between safety and independence, however, choose independence. Even when cognitive problems like dementia are present, a certain amount of risk is usually considered a worthwhile trade-off if it preserves some self-control and quality of life.

To help the conversation go well:

- Know it's likely going to take more than one conversation.
- Aim for 1:1 conversations even if more than one sibling is involved. Agree on a spokesperson.
- Pick the right setting and time. Avoid distractions like the TV and a room full of people. Bring a treat to share together. Choose the time of day when your parent is most relaxed and rested.
- Give it time. Ask questions, allow plenty of time for answers and don't be in hurry to fill in empty spaces. Avoid diving in with, "Mom, we need to talk about your driving!" Ease in with small talk.
- Assume nothing. Explore your parents feelings and values. Conflicts and trade-offs are likely.
- Ask questions instead of making statements. Listening is always more important than telling.
- Watch blame-loaded questions. Stick to "I" statements over "You" statements.
- Don't be undermined by your own body language. The non-verbal messages we send communicate more than the words we use.
- Be a good listener.
- Put your own feelings aside.
- Don't try to solve anything yet. You don't need to come to a conclusion or solution today. It's better to build rapport and collect information at this point.

Four Ways to Minimize Holiday Stress for People Living with Dementia
www.dailycaring.com

1. Minimize your own stress

People with dementia are generally quite sensitive to other people's moods and feelings. If you're stressed and anxious, they're likely to get stressed and agitated too. Keep extra commitments and time-consuming holiday tasks to a minimum.

Ask family to help, use respite programs, hire in-home help, or start saying no to things you don't want to do. If stress starts getting the better of you, take a brief time out away from your loved one so it won't affect them. Step into another room to take some deep breaths or do a 2 minute calming exercise.

2. Plan ahead to modify family traditions

It is overwhelming and stressful to do everything "like we used to." Focus on a few of the most meaningful traditions that are most meaningful for your loved one. This is a way to make them feel important and involved.

3. Involve your loved one in preparations

This helps them feel included and get familiar with the upcoming festivities. Focus on their current abilities and have them help with small tasks they can successfully accomplish such as peeling fruits and veggies, rolling cookie dough, wiping the table, polishing silverware, stringing cranberries or wrapping presents.

Even if they don't do a great job, let them continue if they're enjoying themselves. You can re-do any essential tasks later.

4. Limit holiday decorations

Too much clutter, decor, or twinkling lights could cause overstimulation and disorientation. Focus on cheerful items that bring back happy memories and are important to family traditions.

Creating Dementia-Friendly Holiday Celebrations

A recent AFA webinar showed how to create dementia-friendly celebrations that take a strengths-based, person-centered approach which will help your family savor the moments together with lots of inclusive activity ideas for everyone!
A webinar from the Alzheimer's Federation of America

https://alzfdn.org/webinar_archive/webinar-creating-dementia-friendly-holidays-celebrations/

Where Did Christmas Go?

Erma Bombeck

The following column by Erma Bombeck was first published in 1965 at Christmas. It was instantly adopted as a tradition by her readers. Every year since, it has been republished by popular demand and has now become a Christmas classic in its own right. Thus,here is Erma Bombeck's beautiful and nostalgic greeting to her readers.

There is nothing sadder in this world than to awake Christmas morning and not be a child.

Not to feel the cold on your bare feet as you rush to the Christmas tree in the living room. Not to have your eyes sparkle at the wonderment of discovery. Not to rip the ribbons off the shiny boxes with such abandon.

What happened?

When did the cold, bare feet give way to reason and a pair of sensible bedroom slippers? When did the sparkle and the wonderment give way to depression of a long day? When did a box with a shiny ribbon mean an item on the "charge?"

A child of Christmas doesn't have to be a toddler or a teen. A child of Christmas is anyone who believes that Kings have birthdays.

The Christmases you loved so well are gone. What happened?

Maybe they diminished the year you decided to have your Christmas cards printed to send to 1,500 of your "closest friends and dearest obligations." You got too busy to sign your own name.

Maybe it was the year you discovered the traditional Christmas tree was a fire hazard and the needles had to be vacuumed every three hours and you traded its holiday aroma for a silver one that revolved, changed colors, played "Silent Night" and snowed on itself.

Or the year it got to be too much trouble to sit around the table and put popcorn and cranberries on a string.

Possibly you lost your childhood the year you solved your gift problems neatly and coldly with a checkbook. Think about it. It might have been the year you were too rushed to bake and resorted to slice-and-bake with no nonsense. Who needs a bowl to clean -- or lick?

Most likely it was the year you were so efficient in paying back all your party obligations. A wonderful little caterer did it for you for $3 per person.

Children of Christmas are givers. That's what the day is for. They give thanks, love, gratitude, joy and themselves to one another.

It doesn't necessarily mean you have to have children around a tree. It's rather like lighting a candle you've been saving, caroling when your feet are cold, building a fire in a clean grate, grinding tinsel deep into the rug, licking frosting off a beater, giving something you made yourself.

It's laughter, being with people you like, and at some time falling to your knees and saying, "Thank You for coming to my birthday party."

How sad indeed to awake on Christmas and not be a child.

Time, self-pity, apathy, bitterness and exhaustion can take the Christmas out of the child, but you cannot take the child out of Christmas.

I love Memory Cafe. The people still 'see' my wife and not just all that she can't do. - Paul

The Health Benefits of Living in LARGE Spaces

Commit to connect

There is a tendency for individuals living with dementia and their family members to shrink the world they live in by becoming increasingly isolated from their friends, family and community engagements. It takes a lot of energy to leave home and it's just easier and less risky to stay home. They also want to protect themselves and their loved one from social embarrassment and confusion. But as Drs. Juhl and Dahl pointed out in their recent presentation to MC there is increasing evidence that expanding the space we live in on a day to day basis is a much healthier way to live. Connecting with others helps with feelings of isolation and can boost self-esteem. Making regular social contact with friends, neighbors, family and acquaintances allows one to converse, engage in activities together and think about topics we may not think of independently — all factors that can help our brains and bodies stay active and bring a smile to someone's face. Join us at Memory Cafe! It's fun and offers many easy ways to make yourself and someone you love feel good!

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Remember to follow us on Facebook and Instagram. And be sure we have a current email address for you or your loved one. Thank you!