



Aged To Perfection

...sharing the latest on caring for seniors

FRESH START FOR THE NEW YEAR!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Expressive Communication 2-3

Family Caregiver Education Series 3

Food Survey Study 4

Join Our Wonderful Team! 4

Happy New Year! It's the beginning of 2017, and you've probably heard talk about setting resolutions...perhaps you've even broken a resolution already! Instead of focusing on a list of lofty resolutions, I have just one challenge for 2017. It applies to people of ALL ages and varying degrees of health or ability—no one is left out. It's very simple. And that is to: LIVE LIFE FULLY.

Pretty simple, right? That's it. Three words. Live Life Fully. The beauty is that it is so simple, and yet it is very powerful.

The outlook of aiming to LIVE LIFE FULLY applies equally to everyone because we can each aim to live our own lives to the fullest, and inspire others to do the same. Everyone's definition of a full life is

different, so this idea of living life fully is automatically customized to match individuals.

It also accounts for vary-

ing abilities, levels of health, or other obstacles. LIVE LIFE FULLY to the best of your capabilities and in whichever situation you may find yourself. An entire family of three or four generations could all decide to focus on this same mindset of living life fully, but the way in which each generation lives fully may differ.

After meeting so many seniors and spending countless hours absorbing their wisdom, they have conveyed the message of "what are you waiting for? LIVE LIFE FULLY!" We don't have to wait for the perfect job or a specific relationship or retirement or any other milestone. We need to LIVE LIFE FULLY starting now! Perhaps this year, 2017, can be the year that you and your family commit to LIVE LIFE FULLY no matter what challenges or obstacles arise. From everyone here at Warm Embrace, we wish you and yours a Happy New Year!





EXPRESSIVE COMMUNICATION: RESPONSIVE BEHAVIOURS

Someone who is experiencing dementia may exhibit behaviours that we do not understand. These behaviours have been labeled 'difficult' or 'disruptive' or 'challenging', but is that really a fair assessment of these behaviours?

In caring for people with dementia, the focus often ends up being on the disease itself, rather than on the person who is experiencing the disease. Thus, their behaviours are often automatically assumed to be associated with the disease.

In the past, it was understood that dementia was altering someone's brain, resulting in different behaviour. All behaviour was assumed to be a result of the disease. The newer understanding of dementia is that the changes in someone's brain results in a different perception of the world around them, creating anxiety, fear and other emotions which then lead to different behaviours. Understanding that someone with dementia is experiencing a change in perception which causes behaviour should fundamentally alter how we interact with those who have dementia.

Instead of merely seeing the 'challenge' or 'difficulty' that these behaviours cause for us, or assuming that all behaviour is attributed to disease, we need to reframe these behaviours as a form of communication. Behaviours are a form of personal expression, a unique way of communicating needs. We should then seek to understand the meaning behind the personal expression.

We must remember that people who have dementia were all unique individuals prior to the onset of their illness. They continue to be unique individuals with different personalities, communication styles, interests, life histories, etc. We must never lose sight of the fact that a person with de-

mentia is first and foremost a *person* who requires love, care and understanding, not just a disease or a 'case' that needs to be managed.

One of the greatest gifts that we can offer to someone with dementia is the gift of truly relating to that person—validating their personal experiences and feelings. Someone with dementia is experiencing the world around them differently than they previously experienced the world, and differently than you might be experiencing the world around you. This experience may be frightening, overwhelming, or worrisome, and the feelings that are generated and their emotional response is fully val-



id. We cannot be dismissive of someone's feelings or emotional responses just because we do not deem a situation to be frightening to ourselves. The kindest thing we can do is try to understand the emotional response and validate the feelings that someone else is experiencing. Only then

can we attempt to change someone's experience into something more positive.

If someone is distressed, or having a negative experience, distraction can be helpful, but it is not the first step in the process. Stap emphasizes that you cannot jump immediately to distraction, otherwise you risk being dismissive of someone's feelings. Stap proposes a four-step process where distraction is the final step, not the first option. The four steps are: 1. show you care, 2. show you want to help, 3. redirect, 4. distract.

For example, Agnes has dementia, and she is upset and focused on wanting to return home. The first step is to acknowledge how Agnes is feeling. You might say: "You need to get home, Agnes? I can understand why you're so upset." Attempting to inform Agnes that she is already at home—known



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as reality orientation—is not helpful and only causes more distress; Dupuis and Stap agree that there is rarely, if ever, a good time for reality orientation.

After acknowledging and validating Agnes' feelings, you want to show that you want to help. You might suggest: "let's go see if we can find someone who can help us, Agnes". While on the hunt for someone who can help, you have the opportunity to redirect, the third step. You could say, "I'm tired. Before we look for someone else who can help, do you mind if we rest here by the piano?". After this, you have the opportunity for distraction, the fourth step. You could then say: "You play the piano, don't you, Agnes? Would you play me a tune?"



Had you jumped immediately to distraction via the piano when Agnes first approached you, she likely would have felt even more frustrated that her needs were not being addressed. Acknowledging Agnes' feelings and needs, then assisting her to focus on something that is more comforting, allows for a positive experience overall.

Interpreting all behaviour as a form of personal expression shifts the focus off of the disease of dementia, and refocuses attention on the individual person. Suddenly, behaviours are imbued with meaning and purpose, a form of communication. It is then our responsibility to enable the best possible form of communication and understanding, setting people up for success, regardless of dementia or other illnesses.

Based on lectures from the Gerontology Interest Group workshop *Enhancing Interactions: Exploring Responsive Behaviours* hosted at Luther Village on the Park, Wednesday, May 29, 2013.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT CONNECTIONS FAMILY CAREGIVER EDUCATION SERIES

Community Support Connections (CSC) is hosting a fresh series of Caregiver Support Education Sessions. A caregiver is anyone who provides practical or emotional supports to a family member, friend or neighbour. All are welcome to attend a series of four free, two-hour sessions where participants will learn strategies to ease the burden of caregiving, find out about supports available in the community and much more.

Topics include:

- Reflections on aging & caregiving
- Effective communication
- Home care & resources in the community
- Long-term care

Community Support Connections



Meals on Wheels and More

Choose one series of afternoon, evening or weekend sessions:

Tuesday afternoons—January 10, 17, 24, 31
1:30pm - 3:30pm

Wednesday evenings—January 11, 18, 25, Feb 1
7:00pm - 9:00pm

Saturday mornings—January 14, 21, 28, Feb 4
9:30am -11:30am

Location: CSC's Breslau Office, 61 Woolwich St. N.,
Breslau, ON, NOB 1M0.

Cost: FREE!

Contact: To register or for more information, please contact Linda Flemming, Client/Caregiver Engagement Specialist at 519-772-8787 ext. 210 or email lindaf@cscmow.org





*...a mother & her daughters
providing meaningful
assistance to seniors*

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Warm Embrace Elder Care is owned and operated by a mother-daughter team, Brenda Hamilton and her daughters, Chloe and Avery Hamilton. Their goal is to assist seniors to remain independent for as long as possible through offering various services such as homecare, memory therapy, and one-on-one home exercise for seniors. Inspired by personal experience with family caregiving for Brenda's mother, this mother-daughter team understands firsthand the benefits of enlisting help while caring for a loved one. Warm Embrace believes that independence does not mean that you can do everything by yourself, but rather that you get to choose how everything is done—we grant our seniors the respect and dignity they deserve by helping them to live as they desire.

FOOD SURVEY STUDY

The University of Guelph is conducting a study that researches food habits among people who are age 65+ and who live independently. They are looking for adults who:

- are age 65 or older
- live independently
- speak English
- are Willing to participate in a 90 minute questionnaire

Participants will receive a cookbook (\$25 value) as a token of appreciation.

For more information and to participate, please email: foodsurv@uoguelph.ca or call 519 824 4120 x58081



JOIN OUR WONDERFUL TEAM!

We are delighted to announce that Warm Embrace is rapidly growing, and we are hiring caring and compassionate caregivers. We have an absolutely fabulous team of exceptional caregivers, and we are growing this special team.



Do you know someone who has a huge heart for the elderly and who wants to make a difference in someone's life? Perhaps you know someone who is partially retired and would like a position that is meaningful and provides intrinsic rewards.

If so, we would love to meet them! Please direct them to Warm Embrace because being a caregiver to the elderly might be a perfect fit. For more information about the position and to apply directly online, please visit our website: www.WarmEmbrace.ca/employment