

THE GUIDED LIGHT

LA CROSSE COUNTY'S DEMENTIA NEWSLETTER FOR HOPE, SUPPORT, AND RESOURCES



Grief and Loss in Dementia Care: *Understanding the Emotional Journey*

Grief and loss are part of the journey for people living with dementia and their families. Individuals may experience not only changes in memory, independence, and daily routines, but also shifts in identity, social connections, and a sense of purpose. Families and caregivers often face anticipatory grief, feelings of sadness, and the emotional strain of witnessing these changes over time. Loss can also include altered relationships, roles, and future expectations. While these experiences can be deeply challenging, supports such as counseling, peer or family support groups, respite care, and open communication can help both individuals with dementia and their loved ones navigate grief, maintain meaningful connections, and preserve well-being throughout the journey.

This edition of The Guided Light highlights strategies for coping with grief and loss in dementia, offering support for individuals living with dementia as well as caregivers navigating ongoing change.

Snapshot: Resources For Caregiving

**Aging and Disability Resource Centers (ADRC):
La Crosse County (608)785-5700**

Option Counselors, Dementia Care Specialists and Caregiver Support

“Information and Assistance”, phone consultations, home or office visits, resource guides, access to grants and more!

Wisconsin Departments of Health Services Wisconsin Family Caregiver Support Program, find out more here: wisconsincaregiver.org

Trualta

Join a community of caregivers and experts who offer practical advice, compassion, and encouragement to help you provide the best care.

<https://wisconsincaregiver.trualta.com/>

Parks and Recreation Programming and Local Libraries offer education, opportunities for well-being, and community connection. Many are age-friendly and dementia-friendly

“Even as life changes, the love, moments, and connections you’ve shared remain a part of you—carrying light through every stage of the journey.”
-Anonymous





CARING THROUGH LOSS: UNDERSTANDING GRIEF

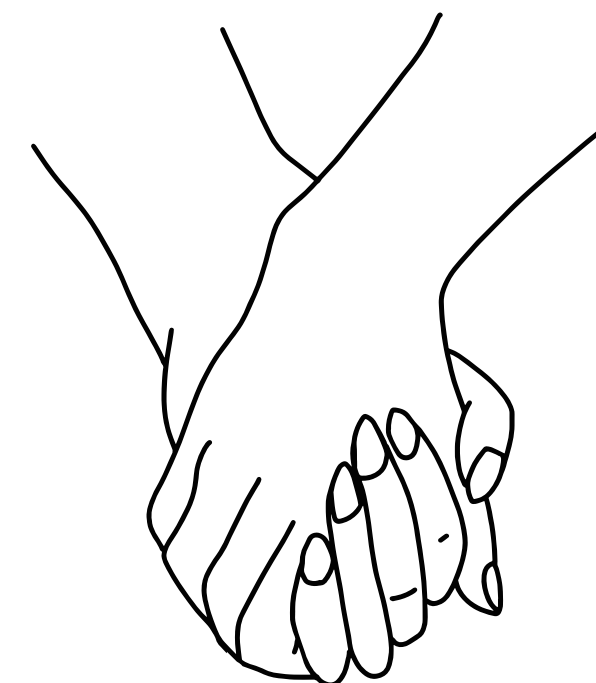
Caring for someone with dementia can bring many feelings, like sadness, frustration, worry, and loss. As dementia changes a person’s memory, personality, and independence, family and caregivers may grieve these changes even while their loved one is still with them. This is called “ambiguous loss” and can feel confusing.

Common feelings caregivers may experience:

- Sadness or grief for changes in the person they love
- Frustration or anger at difficult situations
- Guilt or self-blame for not doing enough
- Loneliness or feeling isolated
- Worry or helplessness about the future

Ways to cope and take care of yourself:

- Talk about your feelings with friends, family, or a counselor
- Join support groups with other caregivers
- Take breaks and rest when you can
- Do small activities that bring you joy, like reading, walking, or music
- Ask for help with caregiving tasks when needed



Finding connection and meaning:

- Enjoy simple shared moments, like looking at photos or listening to music together
- Celebrate small victories and happy memories
- Focus on what the person can still do, not just what they have lost

With understanding, patience, and support, families can navigate the ups and downs of dementia while keeping bonds strong and taking care of themselves. Many of the tips above can be put into action with a reach out to your local aging professionals or getting connected to a support group of peers.

One Minute Break

Let’s take a quick one-minute break to learn a new technique. You will stretch, breathe, and reset—one minute of centering is just enough time to refresh your mind and body. Practice this now and then implement anytime you begin to feel tense or need to recenter.

Step 1:



Sit tall in your chair

Step 2:



Reach arms overhead

Step 3:



Lean side to side, holding the position slightly

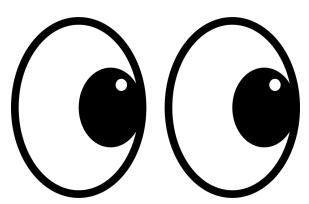
Doing this 1-minute seated stretch helps loosen stiff muscles, improve posture, and increase circulation, making your body feel more comfortable and energized. It also supports flexibility and range of motion in the shoulders, spine, and torso. In addition, combining gentle movement with deep breathing promotes relaxation, reduces stress, and gives a quick mental refresh, helping you feel more focused and ready for what’s next.



Check-In with Yourself:

1. How often do I feel sadness, frustration, or loss related to caregiving?
2. Do I notice changes in my sleep, appetite, or energy?
3. How often do I feel guilty, angry, or lonely?
4. Am I taking time for myself and doing things I enjoy?
5. Do I feel supported by friends, family, or groups?
6. Am I able to notice and appreciate small moments of connection or joy with my loved one?

Turn the page for helpful strategies and resources to care for yourself!



What Grief may look like for you...

If the self-assessment was hard or you aren't sure what the answers mean.. It's important to notice changes in yourself or your loved one—these signs and symptoms can help you understand what's happening and when to seek support.

- Feeling sad, upset, tired or worn out from caring
- Feeling guilty, angry, or frustrated about care
- Having a hard time accepting changes
- Feeling worried, anxious, down or lonely/have no support
- Spending less time with friends, family, or doing things you enjoy
- Finding it hard to take care of yourself while caring for your loved one
- Trouble sleeping, changes in appetite, or feeling low on energy
- Feeling overwhelmed or like you can't cope
- Having physical symptoms like headaches, tension, or getting sick more often



CARING FOR YOURSELF MATTERS TOO

Acknowledge Your Emotions

It is normal to feel sadness, frustration, or grief. Recognizing your feelings is the first step in taking care of yourself.

Reach Out for Support

Connect with caregiver support groups, counseling services, or your local ADRC for guidance and encouragement.

Practice Self-Care

Take care of your body and mind with rest, healthy meals, exercise, and regular breaks from caregiving tasks.

Access Community Resources

ADRCs and other local services can help with respite care, adult day programs, and practical support for daily caregiving.

Stay Informed

Learning about dementia and caregiving strategies can reduce stress and help you feel more prepared.

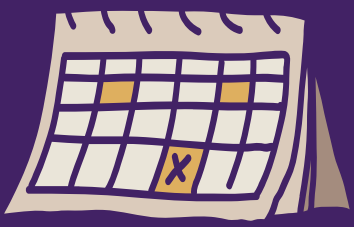
Maintain Social Connections

Keep in touch with friends, family, and community programs to prevent feeling isolated.

Seek Professional Help

If stress or grief feels overwhelming, reach out to counselors, social workers, or mental health services for support.





MARK YOUR CALENDAR! Programs/Events This Quarter

April - May - June 2026

HILLVIEW LIFE CENTER

Where Generations Grow Together

Location: Hillview Life Center, 3511 Park Lane Dr.

- **April 1st Soft Open! 9:30-2:30pm Register**
hlcadulprograms@ywcalax.org
Program: Native Fish Community Art, Brain Nutrition
- **March 25, April 1, 8, 15 at 2:45pm-3:45pm. Zentangle Mindful Art. Register at 608-785-8203**
Free, connect with students and facility dog Rossi while engaging in mindful art.

Grand Opening & Ribbon Cutting

May 1 | 4:00-5:30 PM

Open to the public! Remarks at 4:30pm

Come see the space, meet partners, and experience connection

Celebrate the Life Center's intergenerational mission with an interactive, station-based experience. Guests will be able to experience hands-on stations that reflect the Center's values and upcoming programming, including: Intergenerational cookie decorating, Therapeutic gardening, "Meet the Beekeeper", Visit with Rossi, the UW-La Crosse facility dog, Fish on Fences community art

Grief & Loss - Group Counseling for Caregivers
Enroll now Call Kelsey 608-386-0767
 Next Session Begins when registration fills!



"Because it's frightening to care for someone you don't understand"

- *Tues. March 31, 12:30-1:30pm DASH Center - Onalaska*
- *Fri. April 24, 1:00-2:00pm Holmen Area Community Center- Holmen*
- *Mon. May 18, 9:00-10:00am Black River Beach Neighborhood Center (La Crosse)*
- *Fri. June 19, 12:30-1:30pm Holmen Area Community Center - Holmen*

***MUST REGISTER: Call 608-785-5700 or**

Scan QR Code



Dementia Friends Information Sessions

Dementia Friends is a global movement with the mission of changing the way people think, act, and talk about dementia. Learn a little about what dementia is, how to communicate and take action on small ways we can make life better for everyone. Presented by Dementia Care Specialists from the Aging and Disability Resource Center.

March 31, 1:30pm -2:30pm Shelby Terrace – La Crosse

April 1, 2:00pm -3:00pm Prairie Home – Holmen

May 6, 2:00pm -3:00pm West Salem Terrace – West Salem

May 13, 3:00pm -4:00pm Laurel Manor – Onalaska

Open to the Public. No need to RSVP.

Call Activity and Event Coordinator at Bethany St. Joseph Corp. Community Services at 608-783-1516 with questions.

Brain Healthy Lifestyle: Understanding Brain Health

Did you know that science offers guidance on lifestyle choices that may help protect your brain as you age? In this session, we'll explore the difference between normal aging and dementia, how the brain works, and what "brain health" really means. You'll learn about early warning signs of cognitive decline, key risk factors for neurocognitive disorders like dementia, and how to take proactive steps toward prevention. Join us as we break down the science into practical insights to help you support lifelong brain health. Learn a little about nutrition, exercise, cognitive activity and social engagement, including tips for incorporating into your daily life. Presented by Dementia Care Specialists from the Aging and Disability Resource Center.

April 13, 2:00pm -3:00pm Mill Street Manor – West Salem

April 20, 2:00pm -3:00pm Laurel Manor – Onalaska

Caregiver Education Series

1:00-2:30pm | DASH Center, Onalaska

REGISTER: 608-785-5700 or adrc@lacrossecounty.org

April 16 Emergency Plan | May 21 Benefits 101 | June 18 Hiring Care

Save the Date!

Brain Health ROADMAP

A Community Brain Health & Dementia Awareness Event

JUNE 11 | 9:00 AM - 2:00 PM

DASH CENTER ONALASKA

Free

Interactive Stations • Collect Stamps • Enter the Raffle

Questions? Call the Aging & Disability Resource Center of La Crosse County | **608-785-5700**



**FOR ONGOING
local dementia programs,
resources, support...**

BROWSE: *La Crosse County Programs Guide - <https://tinyurl.com/34yt2wbn>*

CALL: *Aging & Disability Resource Center of La Crosse County - 608-785-5700*