

# THE GUIDED LIGHT

LA CROSSE COUNTY DEMENTIA NEWSLETTER FOR HOPE, SUPPORT, & RESOURCES

## Dementia & Depression

Many individuals with dementia frequently experience depression, particularly in the early and middle stages. Effective treatment options exist, and they can substantially improve the overall quality of life. The cognitive impairment that is experienced with dementias may make it difficult for them to articulate their sadness and other feelings associate with depression, making recognizing the symptoms difficult.

It is important to know that depression in people with dementia does not always look the same as depression in people without dementia. Often, it can appear less severe, symptoms can come and go, they may not last as long, and the person may be less likely to express the changes they are experiencing.

*Content in this edition is adapted from the Alzheimers Association, Alzheimer's Society, and Trualta*

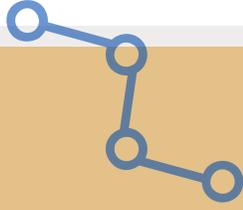
### Defining Depression

Depression is characterized by a sustained low mood lasting at least two weeks. It has the potential to influence appetite, sleep patterns, motivation, and social engagement. Symptoms may include crying, a visible sense of sadness, and self-isolation. Additionally, there might be contemplation of suicide. Discussing depression with your loved one's doctor is crucial for exploring available treatment options.

### Causes of Depression

A person who has experienced depression in the past is more prone to a recurrence if they develop dementia.

Depression typically stems from multiple factors, and these causes can vary widely among individuals. Some factors may include: a history of traumatic or distressing events, other health conditions or disabilities, side effects of medications, insufficient engagement, lack of support, poor or inadequate sleep, excessive alcohol consumption, bereavement, and stress related to finances, future uncertainties, or relationships. These causative factors are common to both individuals with and without dementia. However, if a person in the early stages of dementia experiences depression, it may be directly linked to concerns about their memory and the future.



#### *Did you know?*

*Experts approximate that a substantial proportion, around 40 percent, of individuals with Alzheimer's disease experience notable depression.*

## Differentiating Between Dementia and Depression

Identifying if an individual with dementia has depression can be challenging, as dementia and depression symptoms often overlap. Here are some tips to better distinguish between the two:

- Depression often manifest quicker than most forms of dementia. Typically, this is over a span of a few weeks or months.
- Difficulty with speech, spatial awareness, and orientation, typically encountered when one has dementia, are uncommon in depression.
- In cases of depression, individuals may claim memory lapses, but when prompted, they can recall information. In cases of dementia, individuals are prone to forget recent events & may try to conceal their memory loss.
- Depression can impact reasoning and memory by causing poor concentration. However, these typically show improvement with treatment or depression subsides, which does not occur in irreversible dementias.

## Overlapping Symptoms

Examples of symptoms common to both dementia and depression are:

- Apathy
- Loss of interest in activities and hobbies
- Social withdrawal
- Isolation
- Trouble concentrating
- Impaired thinking

## The Affects of Depression on Dementia

In addition to experiencing negative emotions, the presence of depression in a person with dementia can exacerbate cognitive and memory issues. Depression may intensify changes in their behavior, leading to heightened agitation and aggressiveness. In individuals in the advanced stages of dementia, symptoms of depression often manifest as increased tearfulness and weight loss.



### *A message to caregivers,*

Remember, taking care of yourself is not selfish; it's essential for maintaining the strength and resilience needed to provide quality care to your loved one.

## Diagnosing

Unfortunately, there is no single test to diagnose depression. Diagnosis requires extensive evaluation by a medical professional, to rule out other potential causes. Evaluation will include reviewing medical history, physical & mental examinations, and interviews with close family members. Because of the complexities of a diagnosis, it may be helpful to consult a geriatric psychiatrist, who specializes in depression in older adults.

## Treating Depression

There are many treatments available for depression. However, the cognitive challenges accompanying dementia can pose obstacles in the treatment and management of depression. Certain forms of therapy, like cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), often require intact mental abilities for optimal effectiveness, which may be less effective as dementia progresses.

Nevertheless, individuals at all stages of dementia can still derive benefit from available treatments and should be extensively explored and advocated for by family and friends. Learn more about some options below.

### Antidepressants

Although antidepressants are commonly used for depression, their efficacy appears to be less pronounced in people with dementia. Because of this, the focus of treating depression in individuals with dementia often revolves around enhancing their quality of life. If the depression is severe and other approaches are not working, one may be prescribed a Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor (SSRIs), since they have a lower risk of interacting with other medications. It is important to discuss with your doctor medication changes and follow prescribed recommendations.

### Non-Pharmacological Approaches *(ways to manage without or in addition to medicine)*

People with dementia and depression may benefit greatly from routines, activity engagement, and environmental support. It is important to note individual preferences, strengths and personality when thinking of the following ideas:

#### **Enhancing Quality of Life**

This can be seen in the care and support that is tailored to the individuals personality, needs, and preferences. This type of care also focuses on addressing underlying issues in the patients live, such as loneliness, and managing pain. Overall, the goal of this type of care is fostering an overall positive living experience.

There are ways of managing depression in an individual with dementia that do not need professional advice. Although, it does not hurt to ask a counselor, psychotherapist or doctor for guidance.



- creating a daily routine for independence and confidence, in order to take advantage of the person's best time of day to do difficult tasks, such as bathing
- regular low-impact physical activity, particularly earlier in the day
- engaging in daily living tasks (preparing portions of meals or having 'chores')
- find ways the person can contribute, be sure to acknowledge their contributions (creates purpose and enhances positive emotions)
- create more one-on-one interactions for the individual (in home respite or friendly visitors)
- assess their environment, such as reducing bright lighting and loud noises, or introducing calming features (sun lamps, pictures, weighted blanket)
- acknowledging frustrations and sadness, while continuing to express hope
- connecting to peer support groups and activities
- focus on nutrition

# UPCOMING SUPPORT & EDUCATION

January - February - March 2024

## MONDAYS

- OASIS Day Respite Weekly 9-11am \*Must pre-register 608-780-0471
- Parkinson's Disease Support Group 1st Mon/Month 5-6:30pm Black River Beach Questions: 608-789-8640
- SPARK! On the Go! La Crosse area 2nd Mon/Month, 1-2:30pm 608-785-5700

## TUESDAYS

- Caregiver Support – All Stages 608-386-8908 2nd Tuesday/month 1:15-3pm GoodShepard
- ALS Care Connections Support 1st Tues. 4-5:30pm, Questions: 608-461-2905
- Conversations with Kathy – 4th Tues. 1:15-2:30 Caregiver Camaraderie. 608-386-8908 LaCrosse YMCA Healthy Living Cntr

## WEDNESDAYS

- Connect Smart PWD&Caregiver 608-519-2088. 2nd & 4th Wednesdays, 12:30pm-2pm
- SPARK! at Clearwater Farm Onalaska 3rd Wed/Month, 10:30am-12 608-785-5700
- Grief Support & Education Group @Community Connections 608-519-2088 10-11:30am
- Frontotemporal Support&Education @Holmen Community Center 608-386-0767 2nd Wed, 2-3:30pm Oct.11,Nov.8, Dec.13

## THURSDAYS

- OASIS Day Respite Weekly 11am-3pm \*Must pre-register 608-780-0471
- Brain & Body Fitness Thursdays 2:30-3:30pm 2/15-4/18. STAR Center & UW-L Rec. Therapy students \*Must pre-register 608-797-6295. \$40 9 week session
- Kinship4Caregivers- Book Club -3rd/Thurs. 3/21, 4/18, 5/16& 6/20. 1:30-2:30pm. First Lutheran Onalaska. Call for info, a book and register 608-785-5700

## FRIDAYS

- Giving Hearts Choir – All Stages, Caregivers, Call Ruth 608-792-8608, 10am North Presbyterian

## OTHER CLASSES & SPECIAL EVENTS

- Emergency Planning Session Feb 28, 12:30-1:30pm Southside Neighborhood Center. Register 608-785-5700
- Dementia Live - March 12 at Eagle Crest South, Register by calling 608-785-5700 or online <https://tinyurl.com/y547njkp>
- New Friends Wisconsin Alzheimer's Institute Program MCI/Early Stage mentor UW-Madison students. Call Sheryl 608-265-4042
- Boost Your Brain & Memory Class  
**Mon. March 4-April 22** (8 classes) 1-2:30pm La Crosse Dahl YMCA. Register 608-785-5700
- Activity for at-home Connections **take and make bags for pick up!** Call 608-785-5700.  
Jan.- Beach Get Away!  
Feb.- Things to Love!  
March – Lucky Us! (pick up begins 2/22)
- NEW! Learn & Connect – Cognitive & Memory Loss Education for new diagnosis, early-stage caregiving. at Gundersen Health System. For **information: 608-785-5700**
- Getting to Know Dementia - Educational Workshop for Caregivers **Mondays 12:30-2pm April 1-May 6** (6 sessions) La Crosse Dahl YMCS. Designed to learn about brain-related changes, understand Teepa Snow model of progression of dementia, and approaches for positive relationships. Register 608-785-5700
- Empowered Mind: Elevate your Brain Health **10-11am March 11** La Crosse Main Library. Dementia is not normal aging. Learn risks and prevention, learn about nutrition, exercise, cognitive activity and social engagement tips. Register (608) 789-7122.
- **For local and statewide support groups, call ADRC 608-785-5700**



Sign up for a copy of this newsletter: 608-785-5700