

Alzheimer's Foundation of America: A Resource for Care Partners

By The Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA)

More than five million Americans today are living with Alzheimer's disease. According to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, this number "may triple to as high as 13.8 million people" by 2050.

The Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA), a national nonprofit organization founded by a caregiver, is dedicated to increasing Alzheimer's awareness, educating care partners and healthcare professionals, funding medical research, providing therapeutic programs and encouraging early detection and proper treatment.

AFA was founded by Bert E. Brodsky, whose mother lived with Alzheimer's disease for 12 years. At that time, there was little information available and nowhere to turn for support. Mr. Brodsky's goal was to make sure that no other family living with Alzheimer's disease would have to go the journey alone.

Since its founding in 2002, AFA has grown to a network of more than 2,600 member organizations across the country that provide direct care, services and educational and therapeutic programs to individuals living with dementia and their families. To date, AFA has trained more than 13,000 healthcare professionals in dementia-specific care, provided free, confidential memory screenings to over 3.5 million people, and delivered support, counseling and education to thousands.

Care Partners: Critical Link

Currently, the vast majority of individuals living with Alzheimer's are cared for at home by family members – spouse, son or daughter, sibling, or other relative.

According to a recent study, 60 percent of care partners are women.

Being a care partner can be a very positive experience, bringing personal fulfillment from helping a family member or friend, while developing new skills and relationships with the person being cared for. However, caring for a person with Alzheimer's disease at home also is a difficult task and can become stressful and overwhelming at times. Each day brings new challenges as the caregiver copes with changing levels of ability and new patterns of behavior.

Tips for Managing Caregiver Stress

- **Educate Yourself.** Learn what you can about the disease, including early signs and what to expect.

- **Develop a Care Team.** Gather family and friends and delegate specific roles (managing medications, diet, grooming). Learn about other support services in your area which may be able to offer additional help through respite care and adult day programs.

- **Connect.** Hugs, gentle touch and compassion help you and the individual feel connected and loved.

- **Think Positive.** Set realistic goals and be flexible. Take it one day at a time – not everything can be solved in one day.

- **Stay Healthy.** Watch for signs of emotional and physical stress and get help for yourself.

- **Accept Outside Help.** Hire home care aides or consider adult day care programs.

Help, Support & Resources

AFA's national toll-free helpline (866-232-8484) is available 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., Monday – Friday, and 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturdays.

For more information on AFA and the services it provides, visit alzfdn.org, or e-mail: info@alzfdn.org. National offices located at 322 8th Ave., 7th Floor, New York, NY 10001.

- **Be prepared.** Take care of financial, legal and long-term care planning issues early. Try to involve the individual in all decision making whenever possible.

AFA Caregiving Resources

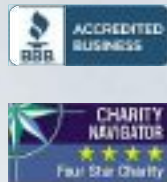
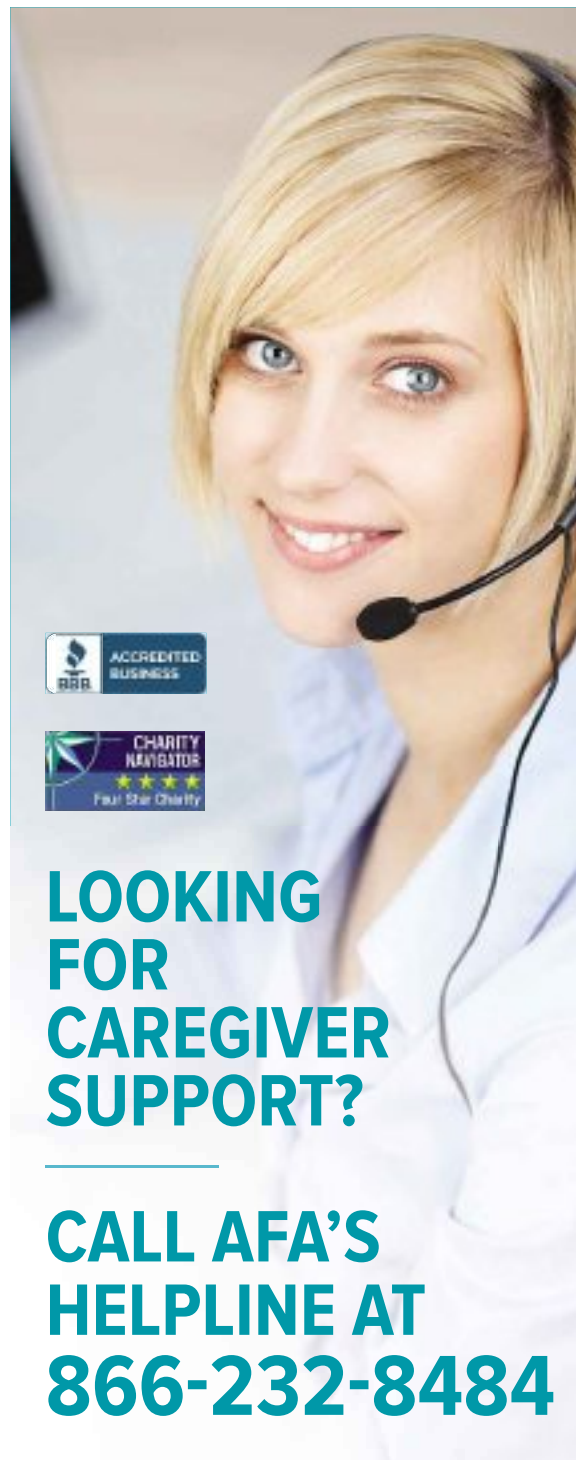
AFA has developed caregiving support resources that are nationally recognized for their innovation and advocacy leadership. The premier AFA care partners resource is its national toll-free helpline (866-232-8484), which is staffed entirely by compassionate licensed social workers who are specifically trained in dementia care. The social workers also are available via Skype, live chat, or e-mail.

AFA also offers weekly, ongoing telephone-based support groups for care partners. The telephone support groups allow participants to connect, to share, to support and to learn from each other. In addition, AFA conducts education conferences across the country as part of a continuing national tour to provide resources and services directly to caregivers and families.

AFA also has an Education & Resource Center, where it holds community classes, memory screenings, therapeutic programs and professional training seminars.



AFA
ALZHEIMER'S FOUNDATION OF AMERICA



LOOKING FOR CAREGIVER SUPPORT?

CALL AFA'S HELPLINE AT 866-232-8484



DONATE TODAY www.alzfdn.org

10 STEPS FOR

Healthy Aging



1 EAT WELL - Adopt a low-fat diet high on fruits and veggies, like strawberries, blueberries and broccoli. Take daily vitamins. Limit intake of red meats, fried and processed foods, salt and sugar.

2 STAY ACTIVE - Brisk walking benefits brain health, while aerobics can boost your heart rate, and weight training builds strength and flexibility.

3 LEARN NEW THINGS - Pick up a new hobby like playing tennis, learn to speak a foreign language, try a cooking class, or something you haven't done before.

4 GET ENOUGH SLEEP - At least 7 to 9 hours is a good night's rest. Insomnia or sleep apnea can have serious physical effects and negatively affect memory and thinking.

5 MIND YOUR MEDS - Medication can affect everyone differently, especially as you age. A medication that didn't trigger side effects in the past can suddenly cause an abnormal reaction. Talk to your doctor about all medications, whether over-the-counter or prescriptions.



Living a healthy lifestyle becomes even more important for better aging. The things we do to keep body and heart healthy—nutritious diet, physical activity, and social connections – also can help promote brain health and wellness. Here are 10 steps for successful aging:



7 STAY CONNECTED - Invite friends and family over for a meal, board games, or just to hang out. Maintaining an active social life is important for mental health and keeping a positive attitude.



8 KNOW YOUR BLOOD PRESSURE - If your blood pressure is high, get it under control under the supervision of a healthcare professional.



9 SEE YOUR DOCTOR - Maintain checkups. Health screenings are key to managing chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity. Speak with your physician about any concerns or questions you have about your health.

6 STOP SMOKING AND LIMIT ALCOHOL - Smoking can increase the risk of other serious illnesses, while too much alcohol can impair judgment and cause accidents, including falls, broken bones, and car crashes.



10 GET A MEMORY SCREENING - Our brains need regular checkups, just as other parts of our bodies do. A memory screening is a quick, easy, non-invasive exam for our brains. Talk to your doctor about getting a screening as part of your annual wellness exam or call AFA at 866-232-8484.



Call AFA for a free memory screening



NATIONAL MEMORY SCREENING PROGRAM

CALL 866-232-8484



www.alzfdn.org

6 TIPS TO KEEP YOUR MEMORY SHARP

BY VANESSA CACERES

November is Alzheimer's Disease Awareness Month, and that may get you thinking about your memory. Just like you exercise the muscles in your body, you need to exercise your brain to keep your memory and thinking sharp, said Dr. Conn Foley, a geriatrician and senior vice president of Parker Jewish Institute for Health Care and Rehabilitation in New Hyde Park. Here are a few ways to do that:

1. STAY ACTIVE IN GROUPS

No matter what your interest—photography, crafts, games, business networking, or anything else—you can find a group for it. Group involvement keeps your mind fine-tuned and keeps you socially active, which is a key part of brain health, Foley said.

2. EXERCISE REGULARLY

Marilyn Cleary, an occupational therapist at St. Charles Hospital in Port Jefferson, recommends physical activity, which increases blood flow to your brain and improves mood and well-being. Plus, if you exercise with others, you're contributing to that social involvement that's so important as we get older.

3. ENGAGE IN SOME MENTAL GAMES

Puzzles and board games can give your brain a workout, said Chuck Fuschillo, President and CEO of the Alzheimer's Foundation of America in New York. In fact, here's a mental challenge Fuschillo recommends: Brush your teeth or your hair with your non-dominant hand. That forces your brain to think outside of your normal routine.

4. PUT ON YOUR DANCING SHOES

Learning certain kinds of dancing, such as ballroom dancing, forces you to pay attention both mentally and physically, Fuschillo said. That keeps your mind engaged and your memory sharp.

5. BE A LIFELONG LEARNER

Take classes, expand your vocabulary, and constantly give yourself new challenges. You'll get more out of life and help your brain, Cleary advised.

6. WATCH YOUR MEDICATIONS

There are certain medications that can affect memory. If you take medications and don't feel as sharp as you once did, ask your doctor if what you take could affect your memory, Foley said.

By the way, you may be wondering if any "senior moments" of forgetfulness that you've had are normal. If you sometimes forget where you left the keys or the name of something from long ago, that's normal. Forgetting the name of a family member or forgetting how to do a part of your daily routine is something you should discuss with your doctor, Foley said. The Alzheimer's Foundation also offers memory screenings across the U.S., Fuschillo said.

