



## ACCEPTING HELP ALONG THE JOURNEY

September marks the start of a new season. Cooler weather, autumn colours, the return of sports programming and the Thanksgiving holiday are just some things people living with dementia from across the province shared as being their favourite parts of fall.

Fall also brings with it a new edition of *Insight*. In this issue we focus on the importance of asking for and accepting help, which isn't always easy to do. We provide information on a variety of programs and services that offer assistance in your community, including those offered by the Alzheimer Society of B.C. We also interviewed a person living with dementia who rallied the support of her entire community after receiving a diagnosis.

"Fall is my favourite time of the year. The colour of the leaves, all the reds and golds...it's the beauty before the cold."

- A person living with dementia

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## CONNECTING TO A VILLAGE OF SUPPORT – BLANCHE'S STORY

Blanche Fennell, a cheerful and social woman, lives in the village of Clinton, B.C. Daily coffee shop gatherings with neighbours, frequent walks and joining in on some of the activities in her village are a few things that keep Blanche active in her community. She is also a strong advocate of having open conversations about her experience with dementia in order to reduce the stigma around the disease.

Below, she shares how support from her husband and community has helped her face dementia with joy and optimism.

### HOW DID YOU INITIALLY REACT AFTER RECEIVING YOUR DIAGNOSIS?

A couple of years ago, after experiencing problems with my memory, I was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease at the age of 67. I knew I was having problems remembering things, but I was still surprised by my diagnosis.

My husband and I both had family members with dementia, so I knew a little about what was to come. Despite this, I didn't really know what my journey would look like. The main thing for me now is to make every day count and each day special.

### HOW DID YOU SHARE YOUR DIAGNOSIS WITH OTHERS?

I am very open about my diagnosis and I have let the people in my village of Clinton know about my condition. I want them to know that I may have problems sometimes and I might need assistance.

I told them to ask me if I need help if I ever look unsure or confused about where I am or what I am doing. They all understand what I'm going through and I'm able to depend on them. This is what I appreciate about living in a small town – I have a whole village behind me, literally!



Blanche, pictured above, has the support of the residents in the village of Clinton.

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## HAVE YOU NEEDED ASSISTANCE SINCE YOUR DIAGNOSIS?

So far I'm doing pretty well. I've had to ask people in my community a few questions about things that are supposed to be going on in the village, like "Is music in the park this week or next week?"

My husband is also there for me all the time. It was his idea to put up a whiteboard in our house. He leaves messages on it for me which helps me know what is happening around my household. I look at it every day, it keeps me going. The whiteboard has worked wonderfully for me and others might also find it helpful if they don't already do something like this.

## WHY IS SPEAKING UP ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH DEMENTIA IMPORTANT TO YOU?

I think more people should be open about living with dementia. I think it's important that people are not ashamed of it. It's a disease like any other disease. We cope with it the best way we can. Everyone has their own way – my way is to put it out there and have an entire community look after me, not just my close family and friends. It's nice to have that additional support.



## DO YOU HAVE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA?

Don't be afraid of your diagnosis. Don't hide it. Let the people around you know what is going on and what stages you are in so they can help you.

You can still be a part of your community. You can still do things. I have a positive attitude every day and I still have a good life.

*A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO BLANCHE FOR HER CONTRIBUTION TO INSIGHT.*

## SHARE YOUR CREATIVE WORK WITH US!

Would you like to have your creative work featured in *Insight*? We welcome submissions of:

- Poems, personal stories or other creative writings
- Photographs, drawings or paintings
- Ideas for topics to be covered

For more information on how to submit your content and ideas, see [page 8](#).

## ASKING FOR AND ACCEPTING HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT

Dementia can affect your ability to complete tasks that you used to do without difficulty, like following a recipe or managing the family budget. One way to cope with the changes you are experiencing is to focus on what you are still able to do. However, there may come a time when accepting help from family members and friends will be necessary to maintain your quality of life.

### THE BENEFITS OF ASKING FOR HELP

It's not always easy to ask for help. You may feel pride about your independence or uncomfortable when others get involved. It's important to recognize that when you ask for help, you are actively taking control of the situation rather than losing control. It can also be reassuring to know that you don't need to struggle with tasks on your own. Often times, two people can tackle a problem better than one. In the end, we all get by with a little help from family and friends.

### HOW DO I KNOW WHEN I NEED ASSISTANCE?

Knowing when to ask for help can be a difficult decision to make on your own. It may also be hard for others to know when and how to help you. Here are some signs that may indicate when accepting help may be practical, supportive or necessary:

- You find yourself withdrawing from activities due to changes in your abilities. For example, you don't have guests over for dinner anymore because you are unable to cook the whole meal yourself or you no longer enjoy a hobby because you can't remember all of the steps. With assistance, you may be able to continue these activities.



- You are repeatedly frustrated or discouraged when trying to complete a task. With help, you could accomplish the task without wasting valuable energy.
- You find yourself needing more time to accomplish daily activities. For example, if you have a morning appointment, you may feel less rushed if you ask your spouse or family member to prepare breakfast for you.
- You are making mistakes that could be harmful to yourself or others, such as burning pots on the stove or making errors while driving. With assistance, you may be able to continue these activities or find safer alternatives.

Adapted and reprinted with permission from: Snyder, Lisa (2010). *Living Your Best with Early-Stage Alzheimer's*. North Branch, MN: Sunrise River Press. Available on [www.sunriseriverpress.com](http://www.sunriseriverpress.com). or [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com).

## PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS

We asked people living with dementia from around the province to share their experiences of asking for help after receiving a diagnosis.

### WHAT ARE SOME ACTIVITIES THAT YOU HAVE ASKED FOR ASSISTANCE WITH SINCE YOUR DIAGNOSIS?

- "Household chores."
- "Remembering to take medications and phone numbers."
- "Deciding what to wear."
- "Remembering birthdays, appointments and the daily schedule."
- "Help finding misplaced items."
- "I need help when I have to go somewhere outside of my 'driving zone'."
- "I hate asking for help, but I love to be asked for my help – it's my ego."
- "I bring a support person to medical appointments."
- "I ask for help with transportation because I'm no longer driving."
- "Assistance motivating me to get out of the house and be active."
- "Shopping – we do it as a team now."
- "Help with directions."
- "I ask my friends to understand that I can't be around big groups anymore."
- "My husband does most of the cooking now."

### WHO DO YOU ASK FOR HELP WHEN YOU NEED IT?

- "My spouse."
- "Google."
- "Home support worker."
- "I ask both my sons for advice."
- "Anybody."
- "My friends."
- "My daughter in-law is great."
- "Technology."
- "My doctor/specialist."
- "Online chat groups."
- "My landlady."



## THE SOCIETY OFFERS HELP THROUGHOUT THE PROVINCE

The Alzheimer Society of B.C. plays an important role in the lives of people living with dementia, their caregivers, family members and friends. The Society is dedicated to helping people build the knowledge, skills and confidence in order to live well with dementia. Below we share information about some of the Society's programs and services that are available throughout the province. To learn more, contact your [local Resource Centre](#) or call the [First Link® Dementia Helpline](#) at 1-800-936-6033 (Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.).

### EARLY-STAGE SUPPORT GROUPS

A diagnosis of dementia impacts many areas of your life and it's common for people to experience a variety of feelings. To help people living with dementia strengthen their coping abilities, the Society offers support groups for people who are in the early stages of the disease. These support groups are a place to exchange information, support and friendship with others who are living with dementia.



### MINDS IN MOTION®

A social and fitness program for people experiencing early symptoms of dementia, as well as for a caregiver, family member or friend. The 45-minute fitness program is led by a certified fitness instructor and is followed by an hour of socializing, light refreshments and activities in a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere.



### SHAPING THE JOURNEY: LIVING WITH DEMENTIA®

A six-session educational program designed specifically for people experiencing the early symptoms of dementia as well as for a caregiver, family member or friend. This program is for people who want to explore the journey ahead in a positive and supportive environment.



## FINDING HELP IN YOUR COMMUNITY

People living with dementia can benefit from support, information and services available in their communities. Support systems may include family members, friends, your local health authority or community organizations. Below are some examples of the types of resources to look for in your community.

### FAMILY MEMBERS, FRIENDS AND NEIGHBOURS

Stay connected with the people who care about you. Family members, friends and neighbours are an important source of support and can help you along the way. "I always ask my oldest son for help, he is always available," shares one person living with dementia.

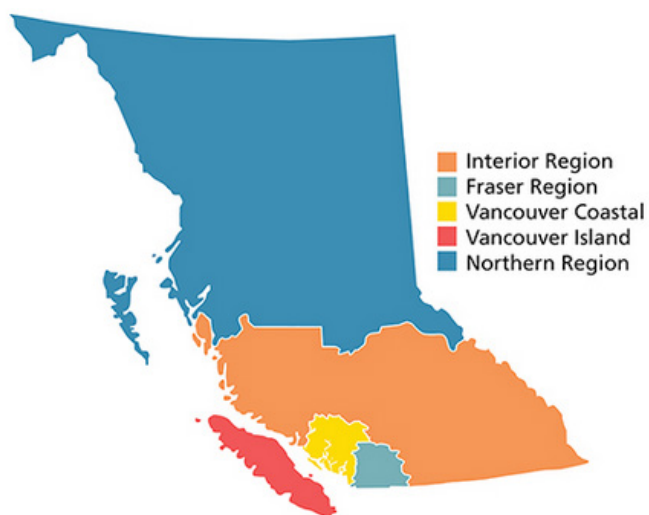
### COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Your local recreation centre, neighbourhood home or seniors centre may offer a variety of leisure and social activities. Some may also offer shuttle transportation to and from their location. Call your local municipality's office, or go to [www.civicinfo.bc.ca/municipalities](http://www.civicinfo.bc.ca/municipalities) to find the community centre nearest to you.

Local volunteer transportation, shopping and meal preparation programs can also be found throughout the province. To find out whether these programs are offered in your community, connect with your [local Resource Centre](#) or call the [First Link® Dementia Helpline](#) at 1-800-936-6033.

### YOUR LOCAL HEALTH AUTHORITY

In B.C. there are five regional health authorities and a First Nations health authority that govern, plan and deliver services, like home support. To learn more about your local health services, call Service BC at 1-800-663-7867 or visit the Ministry of Health's website at [www.health.gov.bc.ca/socsec/](http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/socsec/).



### BC SENIORS' GUIDE, 11TH EDITION

This resource provides information about the many provincial and federal programs and services available to seniors throughout B.C. It includes sections on benefits, health, lifestyle, housing, transportation, finances, safety and security. Available in English, French, Chinese and Punjabi, it's a great resource for learning about what is offered in your community. To get a copy of the BC Seniors' Guide call 1-877-952-3181 or visit [www.seniorsbc.ca](http://www.seniorsbc.ca).



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- Subscribe online at [alzbc.org/insight-bulletin](http://alzbc.org/insight-bulletin)
- Call 604-681-6530 or toll-free 1-800-667-3742

## CONTRIBUTE

We welcome contributions, such as personal stories, photography or original poems, from people living with dementia. Please provide your name, mailing address, phone number and/or email address if you would like to be contacted. All submissions will be considered based on theme and space.

- Email [Insight@alzheimerbc.org](mailto:Insight@alzheimerbc.org)
- Call 604-681-6530 or toll-free 1-800-667-3742
- Mail to the Alzheimer Society of B.C., care of *Insight*:  
300-828 West 8th Avenue  
Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 1E2

## CALL THE FIRST LINK® DEMENTIA HELPLINE

A confidential, province-wide support and information service for anyone with questions about dementia, including people living with dementia, their caregivers, friends, family, health-care providers and the general public.

- Phone 1-800-936-6033  
Lower Mainland: 604-681-8651  
Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Email [supportline@alzheimerbc.org](mailto:supportline@alzheimerbc.org)

## ARE YOU A CAREGIVER?

*Connections* is a quarterly print and digital publication produced by the Alzheimer Society of B.C.

To subscribe:

- Visit our website at [alzbc.org/connections-newsletter](http://alzbc.org/connections-newsletter)
- Call 604-681-6530 or toll-free 1-800-667-3742



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