



LIVING WELL WITH DEMENTIA

Summer has finally arrived! The warmer summer months present wonderful opportunities to participate in activities that can be enjoyed outdoors, like gardening, fishing or going for a walk. Doing physical activities that you enjoy can help you feel better, reduce your stress and maintain your health.

There are many other things we can do to take care of our health. In this issue of *Insight* we discuss the benefits and importance of mental and social stimulation. People living with dementia share the different ways they keep their brain active and stay connected to those around them. It's never too soon or too late to make positive lifestyle changes to maintain or improve your health and well-being.

IN THIS ISSUE

Keeping your mind active: The importance of mental and social stimulation (page 2)

Finding joy in your everyday life (page 4)

Living life today as a person with dementia (page 5)

Meet Lynn Jackson: A dementia advocate and volunteer (page 6)

Creative corner (page 7)

KEEPING YOUR MIND ACTIVE: THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL AND SOCIAL STIMULATION

There are many elements of living that contribute to our general health and well-being. Taking steps to be as healthy as you can be can help you feel better, may help slow the progression of the disease and may improve your ability to cope with the changes you are experiencing.

When we think about activities for healthy living, we often consider exercise and eating well, but did you know that social and mental stimulation also play an important role for your health?

Below we share information and tips on social connection and keeping your brain active. Your abilities, health and interests should be taken into consideration when choosing your activities. If you have questions about your own situation, speak to a health-care professional.

STAY CONNECTED WITH OTHERS

A diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or another dementia may lead to feelings of isolation and loneliness for some people. Social activity helps people with dementia stay engaged and feel fulfilled, improving their quality of life. Staying active and involved can also help to reduce stress, boost mood and keep relationships strong.

Tips for staying socially active

- Accept invitations for a get-together with family and friends and extend a few of your own.
- Make the most of your daily opportunities to socialize. For example, chat with your store clerk or make conversation in the elevator.
- Talk on the telephone or correspond via email with friends and family.
- Engage with your local community by volunteering.
- Join a book club, hobby group or exercise group that goes at a pace you are comfortable with.



"After my diagnosis, I realized the healthiest thing for me was to live life to the fullest. I still love making greeting cards, collecting recipes, reading, and attending dances and events. Getting out and staying socialized is so important for people with dementia."

- Bea Kraayenhof (centre), living with frontotemporal dementia

- The Society's Minds in Motion® fitness and social program for people experiencing early symptoms of dementia and their care partners may be the right fit for you. Connect with your [local Resource Centre](#) or call the First Link® Dementia Helpline at 1-800-936-6033 to learn more.

Continued on page 3...

INSIGHT SUMMER 2017

...continued from page 2

GIVE YOUR BRAIN A WORK OUT

Studies have shown that mental stimulation, which is making your brain work in different ways, improves brain activity. Many people living with dementia agree that it is important to challenge your brain every day, but it doesn't have to be difficult. It can be as simple as dialing the phone with the hand you don't usually use or trying a new word puzzle.

Activities to stimulate your brain

- Keep up hobbies such as sewing or carpentry or take up a new hobby.
- Play chess, word and number puzzles, jigsaws, crosswords or memory games.
- Read a book or go see a movie and discuss it with a friend.
- Pursue cultural activities like going to plays, museums, concerts and galleries.

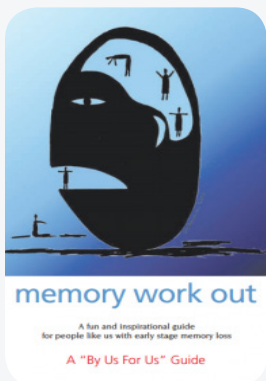
Write down some of the ways you can stay socially and mentally active this summer:

By Us For Us® Memory Work Out Guide

Check out the By Us For Us® Memory Work Out Guide developed by the Murray Alzheimer Research and Education Program. This guide provides examples of cognitive exercises and it encourages people with dementia to develop and maintain regular "workouts" for the brain.

What makes this guide particularly useful is that it is written by people with dementia for other people with dementia.

To download a copy visit <http://ow.ly/1gWh30bJLlo> or call 1-866-330-7933 to order a copy today.



"I decided to be proactive about my health after my diagnosis. I took up archery because it requires a lot of focus and concentration. It helps with hand-eye coordination and keeps my mind sharp."

- Phyllis Fehr, living with Alzheimer's disease

FINDING JOY IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE

Jim Mann, a member of the B.C. Dementia-Friendly Communities Leadership Group and a long-time advocate for people living with the disease shares his thoughts on continuing to live a fulfilling life after a diagnosis of dementia.

"What's good for your heart is good for your brain." This is a phrase I think we have all heard, especially with today's emphasis on good health. We are told that if we eat smart, socialize and exercise, there will be a very real benefit to our brain health and perhaps a delay to the onset of dementia.

And there's something else I read about recently. Having a purpose.

That's right, a purpose. A reason to get out of bed in the morning. Doing something that gives you pleasure, makes you smile, maybe even stimulates and rewards you. Something that is positive for you that reinforces that you, indeed, are still here and able to contribute.

The September 2015 issue of *Practical Neurology* had an article which cited studies at Rush University in Chicago that "show that elderly [people] with a positive sense of purpose in life may be able to reduce their cognitive decline by 50 per cent."

That's pretty powerful stuff, don't you think?

A dementia diagnosis can feel to some like being told that their next task is to climb Mt. Everest: overwhelming and insurmountable. Of course, for a short time those feelings are okay, but on reflection, I hope you realize that life is too important and definitely worth living.

Which takes me back to the need of a purpose. Something you want to do.

Maybe it's a volunteer role once a week. Or joining a walking group at your local community centre.

Whatever and wherever you find it, I hope your personal engagement brings you joy and purpose because, as the magazine article noted, "Purpose in life is one of the main components of quality of life."



SHARE YOUR STORIES WITH US

We welcome submissions of personal stories, photography or original poems. For more information on how to submit your content and ideas, see [page 8](#).

LIVING LIFE TODAY AS A PERSON WITH DEMENTIA

After encouragement from her husband, Sue began writing her thoughts and feelings about her life after a diagnosis of dementia. Here is what she had to share.

About two and a half years ago I was faced with a diagnosis of dementia and I sincerely did not like this. The first year I tried to deny I had the problem. I found that things and doings that interested me were gone from my world and sometimes people too, but as time passed I had to face the truth and life went on.

Not long ago I tried therapeutic horseback riding for the first time – a dream of mine since I was a little girl. Last summer, a friend and I were having coffee, when she asked me a loaded question: "Would you like to 'RIDE' again?" I jumped at the idea of horseback riding for a second time and that started the marvelous journey of learning to laugh and live again. After three months of riding I graduated to become the 'Most Improved Rider' in my group and I can hardly wait for spring to happen so I can go riding again.

I find the next part in my journey through this changed life the most interesting. It started with trying to renew my sewing abilities, which weren't working quite as well as before. I would visit my lovely sewing room and try to construct a pattern for a quilt, something I had done many times before with no difficulty. But now, no two pieces fit together, so I put it all away.

Among all the stuff in the cupboard in the sewing room were some puzzles. I took one out, looked at it and said, "Yes I can do this." It was picture of a train making its way through the mountains. The puzzle has over 1,000 pieces and today, I am just half-way finished.

The interesting thing is that I related every piece of the puzzle to putting my sewing pattern together. If I can do the puzzle and finish it correctly, what is to stop me from getting out my sewing pattern one more time and sewing the pieces together like it was a puzzle?

Another way my mind is working is to consider each piece of the pattern like a rose falling to the ground and when the pattern is finished there will be a rose lying peacefully on the ground waiting to be put in a vase of water.

*A special thank you to Sue for her contribution to **Insight**.*



Sue and her horse named Blue taking the Blue Ribbon for most improved rider at North Okanagan Therapeutic Riding Academy.

MEET LYNN JACKSON: A DEMENTIA ADVOCATE AND A VOLUNTEER

Lynn Jackson received a diagnosis of frontotemporal dementia in 1999. A desire to share her experience and learn from others prompted her to help form the Dementia Advocacy and Support Network International (DASNI), becoming its first Vice-President.

Lynn has also worked with the Alzheimer Society of B.C. to advocate for people with dementia. She joined the Society's Leadership Group for People Living with Dementia in 2015. The group helps to inform and guide the Society's Dementia-Friendly Communities initiative. Recently, Lynn shared her experience as a member of the Leadership Group.

WHY DID YOU FIRST JOIN THE B.C. DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES LEADERSHIP GROUP?

It was a good opportunity to help other people living with dementia. It felt good to advocate for others, which in turn helped me too.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST ABOUT BEING A PART OF THE GROUP?

I enjoy being with the group members as well as the staff at the Society. I also enjoy providing feedback on the different Dementia-Friendly Communities projects – like the recently released Guide for Recreation Service Providers.

WHY DO YOU VOLUNTEER?

If you can get involved, I think it's much better than just sitting at home and watching TV. It's so important to keep your mind active – and by going out and being with others, you can help keep up your verbal and mental skills.



I enjoy volunteering. It's an amazing feeling that you get when you help others. Years ago, when I was co-facilitator for an early stage support group in Vancouver, someone would invariably say "I am so glad I have this group, it's really helped me" and it felt good to hear that.

WHY IS DEMENTIA ADVOCACY IMPORTANT TO YOU?

More and more people are being diagnosed with dementia each year, yet there is still such a stigma associated with the disease. The more we talk about dementia, the more it helps to open up conversations and decrease the stigma around dementia.

Dementia is something to deal with and not to be afraid of.

CREATIVE CORNER

A diagnosis of dementia can generate a diverse range of thoughts and feelings. Consider whether participating in a creative hobby such as painting, photography or writing could be helpful to you.

THIS IS JUST THE WAY IT IS

This is just the way it is
I am not the way I was
I am scared, I am trying to keep it deferred
While others search for a cure.

I am asking for empathy
I am asking for care
I am asking for your commitment
As I trudge up these long stairs.

Education and support
Or just a friendly touch
Can warm my heart and brain
And relieve a lot of strain.

Be respectful and empower me
In whatever way you can
Help me to focus on honouring
Those persons with dementia.

This is just the way it is
We need you all involved
Help us find some peace of mind
Let awareness be our call.

– Myrna Norman



Myrna Norman (left) received the Society's Mike Crowe Award of Hope last year.

ABOUT MYRNA

Myrna has volunteered with the Alzheimer Society of B.C. for a number of years. She has regularly represented the Society at community wellness events, distributing materials, taking donations and answering questions and has spoken at several important events, like the Society's Annual General Meeting in 2016.

Myrna publicly shares the ways in which her dementia diagnosis has affected her life with great openness. She is a strong advocate for the Society's services, and a source of inspiration for many other people living with dementia.

SUBSCRIBE

If you've enjoyed this issue of *Insight* and would like to receive it regularly, please subscribe. Help us reduce our costs by choosing to receive *Insight* by email.

- Subscribe online at 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
- 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, professionals 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

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
- Call 604-681-6530 or toll-free 1-800-667-3742



Alzheimer Society of B.C.
300-828 West 8th Avenue
Vancouver, B.C. V5Z 1E2

Phone: 604-681-6530

Toll-free: 1-800-667-3742

Fax: 604-669-6907

Email: info@alzheimerbc.org

Website: www.alzheimerbc.org

Insight is produced by the Alzheimer Society of B.C.'s Advocacy and Education department. Articles cannot be reproduced without written permission.