



A decision as important as *life* itself.™

SUPPORT GROUP

**Mild Cognitive Impairment
Education & Support Group
for Families affected by MCI**

Meeting: April 19, 2007

Time: 9:30am

Location: Senior Friendship
Center for Healthy Aging,
1900 Brother Geenen Way,
Sarasota

Speaker:

To be announced

THE MEMORY DISORDER CLINIC

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Hospital and State of Florida
Department of Elder Affairs

Managing Stress

Stress is our body's reaction to a state of extreme difficulty, pressure or personal strain. When we face difficult situations or feel threatened or tense, our bodies react with chemical changes. These changes prepare us for action, such as fighting or fleeing. This is a healthy response to an immediate danger. However stress can be very negative when we react (or over react) to situations that are beyond our control such as being stuck in traffic or being cut off by a poor driver. Over reaction to these stressors can lead to negative responses such as "road rage".

There are two types of stress. Acute stress is a short-term response to a tense situation. This prepares us to flee from the situation or put up a fight in response. The reaction to this type of stress allows us to react to dangerous or difficult situations and take action to reach a safe outcome.

Chronic stress is when one feels stressed for a longer time. Caregiving can be one such long-term stressor. Chronic stress can lead to conditions such as depression, anxiety or other physical problems. It can lead someone to become so stressed they are unable to function in any activity. The secret to living with stress is to recognize what our tolerance levels are and how to cope positively to make changes.

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) reports that when someone suffers from chronic stress their hypothalamus, the part of the brain that controls how we react to stress, produces large amounts of stress hormones. When this happens the body's immune system becomes more vulnerable to illness. The way chronic stress affects the body is not only physical, it can also affect how we act. Negative behaviors, such as anger, overeating, giving up hobbies or physical activities or withdrawing from social activities, can lead to more serious health issues.

It is important to recognize our personal warning signs. These can include appetite change, difficulty sleeping, excessive worry, frequent headaches, gastrointestinal distress, tense or sore muscles, panic attacks or prolonged feelings of sadness or lack of self-worth. If stress is causing these types of problems, it is time to seek help. Start with a conversation with your primary care physician. Sometimes medical intervention is necessary. Mental health professionals groups can provide strategies to cope with stressful situations. Support groups also provide information about resources. The Alzheimer's Association offers many Caregiver Support Groups in the local area. Call 941/365-8883 for more information.

CHALLENGING YOUR MIND AND IMPROVING HEALTH IN RETIREMENT

FROM THE MATURE MIND BY GENE COHEN, M.D., Ph.D.

The following are ten ways to stay mentally and physically fit in later life. These suggestions are based on extensive research, including the latest findings from neuroscience.

1. **Play games and do puzzles.** Word games such as crossword puzzles or Scrabble are particularly useful, although any type of game that requires mental manipulation or recall of facts is helpful.
2. **Plan a dinner and book or video discussion group.** Provocative discussion and food for thought in a stimulating and entertaining social atmosphere is as good for the mind as it is for the palate.
3. **Travel to some place new- local or distant.** It can be as close as a new museum or as far as the Orient.
4. **Enroll in a course about an unfamiliar subject.** Lifelong learning is lifelong growth and development.
5. **Explore the hobby or crafts section at a bookstore for new ideas.**
6. **Volunteer.** Volunteering is a way of sharing special skills or learning new ones while interacting with people and providing a community service.
7. **Consider new part time work.** Many “retired” people continue to work on a part time basis for money and social stimulation.
8. **Correspond with family and friends.** Setting a regular schedule for writing letters or emails to family and friends is an excellent exercise for your brain.
9. **Develop a dream journal.** Dreams and daydreams are most accessible ports to our inner creativity.
10. **Write or record your memoirs, autobiography, or family history.** Developing a genealogy, family history, or memoir provides a valuable gift for your family or friends.

Music Therapy

Music therapy is the use of music to gain physical and emotional healing and wellness. A trained and certified music therapist can provide music therapy. Therapy sessions can involve listening to music, music making or both. Research is beginning to reveal how music works to heal the body and mind. The rhythm and tone of music can excite you or relax you. Music therapy can help reduce your heart rate and blood pressure and increase your ability to think, reason and remember.

You can use music therapy to help your mental and physical health. It helps people express themselves, find new memories and calm the body and mind through its rhythm, order and predictability.

Music therapy may improve forgetfulness by:

- Improving your connection to others
- Helping your brain produce a calming substance (melatonin)
- Improving how well you speak
- Stimulating the brain

Experience is simply the name we give our mistakes.

Oscar Wilde

Old Age is a Gift

The other day a young person asked me how I felt about being old. I was taken aback for I did not think of myself as old. I explained that it was an interesting question and I would ponder it.

Old age, I decided is a gift. I am now probably now for the first time in my life the person I have always wanted to be. Oh not my body! I sometimes despair over my old body, the wrinkles, the aches and pains of growing older. And often I am taken aback by that old person that lives in the mirror (who looks like my mother). But I don't agonize over those things for long.

I would never trade my amazing life, my wonderful friends or the life lessons I've learned for less gray hair or a better looking body. As I have aged I have become kinder to myself and less critical of myself. I've learned to become my own friend.

I have seen too many dear friends leave this world too soon; before they understood the freedom that comes along with aging. I plan to live the rest of my life to the fullness. I will dance with myself to those wonderful tunes of the 30's and 40's and if I wish to weep over a lost love I will.

Sure over the years my heart has been broken. How can your heart not break when you lose a loved one, or when a child is suffering? Broken hearts are what give us strength, understanding and compassion. A heart never broken is pristine and sterile and will never know the joy of being imperfect.

I am so blessed to have lived long enough to have my hair turn gray and to have laugh lines be forever etched into my face. As I get older, it is easier to be positive. You care less about what other people think. I have realized that it is okay to make mistakes as long as you learn from them. I have earned the right to be wrong or even a little forgetful.

So to answer the question, I like being old. It has set me free. I like the person I have become. I know that I will not live forever, but while I am still here I will not waste time lamenting what I have been, or worrying about what will be. AND I SHALL EAT DESSERT EVERY DAY.

Alzheimer's Association presents: A Basic Caregiver (ABC) Course

Held on the first Friday of every month at 2PM in Sarasota at Alzheimer's Association located at 1230 S. Tuttle Avenue. The class is also held in Venice at Manatee Community College on the first Monday of every month. Call 365-8883 for reservations and information on other Alzheimer's Association educational programs.

"Comedy Corner"

We know we are getting older when it takes longer to rest than it did to get tired.



News Flash!

The Johnnie Byrd Alzheimer's Research Institute is now accepting research candidates

Contact Lorelei Lindenau-Balazs MA; LMHC for details. 941-917-7197

Free Memory Screenings

The Memory Disorder Clinic offers **free memory screenings** at The Senior Friendship Centers on the 2nd Monday of every month in Sarasota and on the 1st Wednesday of every month in Venice. Call (941) 917-7197 to schedule an appointment.

Sarasota Memorial Hospital Memory Disorder Clinic Administrative Office Location

**1700 S. Tamiami Trail
Sarasota, FL 34239
(941) 917-7197**

www.sarasotageriatrics.com

Clinic Locations

**1921 Waldemere Street
Suite 403, Sarasota
929 S. Tamiami Trail
Suite 203. Osprey**