

The **MASE** Monthly Newsletter

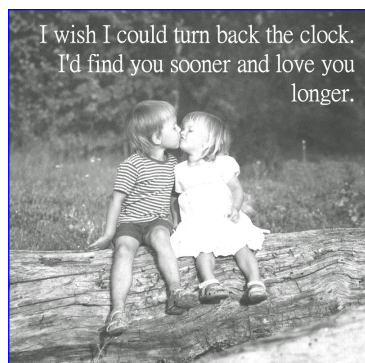
October 2017



Winners of Queen's Award for Voluntary Service

Autumn is here

For many people the change from British Summer time is the delight of having an extra hour in bed. For others it brings a slight fear that the nights will be closing in, and for Carers it can be quite a daunting time. This is a good time of year to try and build up friendships with each other at the groups, exchange telephone numbers, and perhaps take the time to phone each other during the long dark evenings. It is amazing how a chat with someone can cheer you and help an evening to pass quite quickly.



Just a reminder that on **Saturday 28 October**, British Summertime ends and our clocks go back by one hour.

For Carers this time of year can be challenging as the change in the daylight hours can at times prove very difficult and many people with a Dementia may experience Sundowning. This is also known as "late-day confusion."

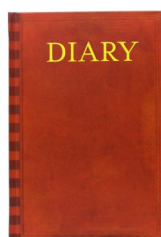
If someone you care for has dementia, their confusion and agitation may get worse in the late afternoon and evening. Make sure your rooms are bright, put extra lights on if necessary to avoid shadows. Mirrors too can be a problem at dusk, if that is the case simply cover them over with a light sheet.

10 Tips to make eating easier for someone with Dementia

1. Try and offer soft food that requires minimal chewing.
2. Use smaller utensils and specially designed cups which allow drinking whilst keeping the chin down (avoid feeder beakers as they encourage people to tip their head back).
3. Choose strong flavours rather than bland ones, as these can stimulate the brain to swallow, and also try to offer a variety of hot and cold food in one meal.
4. If the person you're caring for is extremely slow to swallow, try putting an empty spoon to their mouth, as if offering more food. This can act as a reminder to swallow.
5. Make sure they're sitting upright and are as calm and comfortable as possible before you begin.
6. Consider thickening fluids to make the food easier to control, you can get advice about how to use them from your GP or a dietician.
7. Avoid small hard textures such as sweet corn, peanuts and peas, and stringy textures such as cabbage, or bacon.
8. Cook food longer, mash it with a fork, or puree it in a blender or liquidizer.
9. Try not to offer mixed textures of liquids and solids, such as milk and cereal or minestrone soup as they can make choking more likely.
10. Be patient. Accept that meal times are probably going to take much longer than they used to, but try to prioritise them. If you can help the person you care for to eat it will be well worth the extra time and effort.



Keep a Reflective Diary



Carers are encouraged to use a reflective diary which is a really useful way of gathering personal data and provides a good memory bank of information as to how your journey has progressed. Also for Carers this is a good way to capture what the journey has been like from the beginning and can act as an aide memoir for them when necessary. At the end of your day write down things that have made you smile, and also anything that has upset you. It is amazing just how beneficial and therapeutic capturing things can be. Remember also to jot down any differences you may notice in your cared for and most important remember to list any changes to medication.

Autumn and Sundowning



Autumn is here, and this is the time of year when “sundowning” can be more prevalent, especially for people in the middle stages of dementia. During autumn, the days begin to get shorter. We will be turning the clocks back before you know it, and this will only make a bad situation worse.

Sundowning is the phenomenon where people with Alzheimer’s disease or other forms of dementia become increasingly confused and agitated during the early evening hours of twilight and sunset. This time of day can be especially distressing for people with dementia, and it places a great deal of pressure on the Carers who try to help them stay calm and oriented. Pacing, restlessness and shadowing can become more pronounced during these times. Additionally, hallucinations, wandering, and violent or paranoid behavior can manifest in more severe cases.

There are a host of things you can do to minimise the symptoms of sundown syndrome. They can be simple, such as turning on all the lights in the house before it starts getting dark or slightly changing a loved one’s evening routine. There are many types of dementia, and each one manifests differently in a person. Therefore, trial and error is the best way to find out what techniques can help minimise troubling behaviors.

Different Approaches to Managing Sundowner’s Syndrome

Symptoms of sundowning can be brought on by too much activity or noise toward the end of the day, increased fatigue, shadows caused by low light, and hormone imbalances (which can affect a person’s internal clock). Look for patterns in your loved one’s behavior that will clue you in as to what may be bothering them.

For example, if they become more tired and frustrated in the evenings, then encourage a short nap in the early afternoon (not too late, or they’ll be awake all night) and make a point of keeping nighttime activities soothing and low key. If visual hallucinations and disorientation spike after the sun has set, make modifications throughout the home to minimize shadows, reflections and distorted images that could be misinterpreted.

Sometimes increased lighting, soft music, and a carefully tailored routine can help minimise the confusion and agitation associated with sundown syndrome.

The Risk of a Fall

A third of people aged 65 years and over will fall every year, rising to over 40% in those aged 80 years. There are many reasons why people fall. It can be a result of medication, or perhaps neurological problems. Sometimes, it can be caused by poor vision, or existing muscular problems, which make it harder to move easily.

However some falls can be avoided if extra care is taken at home to make sure the environment is safe. Much of this is common sense, but often not attended to before an accident actually happens. Loose carpet, trailing wires and unmarked steps can all make falling more likely for an elderly person, as can bathrooms without non-slip mats and a lack of rails in the bedroom and bathroom for stability.

Do take the time to do a check of your home to see if you can make the environment a little safer and prevent a fall before it happens. With Winter fast approaching ensure sensible footwear is worn both in the house and also when going out to avoid any slips, trips or falls.



A date for your diary - Friday 15 December 2017



Our traditional Elvis evening will take place this year at The Polish Club in Stafford.
There is a good car park outside the hall and ticket price will include a buffet.
Tickets are £8.50 Available from Daphne or Elaine



If you have a computer please take a look at our website which covers all MASE activities: www.themasegroup.com

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