



The **MASE** Monthly Newsletter

February 2016

Winners of Queen's Award for Voluntary Service



A Memoir of Love - A short story written by Kitty, her husband Ed has Alzheimer's



February 14 - Valentines Day and I had decided to show Ed the cards and photos I had recently found in his storage unit.

I went to get the bright lamp from the corner of the room and put it at the left end of the sofa. Having illuminated the room as much as possible to compensate for Ed's poor eyesight, I was ready to start showing the cards and photos to him.

"Kitty!" he exclaimed, coming out of the bathroom. "I'm so happy to see you". We had eaten our breakfasts together only minutes ago, and yet it was as if it was the first time we had seen each other today. I said "I found some old photos and cards I sent you many years ago and I'm going to show them to you today". "Marvellous! Superb!" he answered, using the words he always used when he was happy about something.

I decided to start with the cards. Although he was no longer able to read books or the newspaper, I hoped he'd still be capable of reading the cards. He was, and he even seemed to understand what he read. He laughed at the funny ones and responded more seriously to the others. After he'd seen them all he looked up at me and said in a reverent tone of voice, "Kitty, I am so touched that you kept these cards all these years."

I didn't even try explaining that he was the one who had kept them. Next we looked at the photographs. Some were from his childhood. There was one of him around age six wearing a sailor suit and posing with his father, and another with his grandparents, sitting on a bench in a beautiful park. I was awestruck when I suddenly realized some of those photographs were more than eighty years old. Then there were several pictures of us together from the '80s and '90s.

He was drawn to the photos just as much as he was to the cards, studying each with interest. The last one was a picture of him with a woman standing behind him. She had her hands on his shoulders and her head was peeking around his, facing the camera. "Ah . . . She loved me," he murmured, an affectionate expression on his face. He kept looking at the photo. "What are you thinking?" I asked when he didn't say anything more. "I'm thinking of love," he whispered.

"That woman in the picture is me Eddy and I still love you." I said. He looked up and gazed into my eyes the way he did when we were lovers. I couldn't tell if he was in the past or the present. It really didn't matter – we were together and even though my darling husband has Alzheimer's and the days are very difficult sometimes, we still have each other.

A Special Note to all Carers

PLEASE remember to be kind to yourselves

- ❌ You have the most difficult job in the world, and it is only natural to feel angry or upset sometimes
- ❌ Try to involve your friends and family more to give you a little respite from the day-to-day routine
- ❌ Give yourselves a pat on the back occasionally - because you do really deserve it!



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Alzheimer's Society Dementia Helpline 0300 222 1122 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday and Saturday and Sunday 10am - 4pm.

Music and Dementia



When in a store how often do you subconsciously hum along to a song playing over the radio whilst you are shopping and how often are you taken back to a distant family memory? It's funny how music can do that.

Music seems to have a way of reaching past your mind and touching your soul. Think about what that could mean for someone with dementia.

So many Carers say that music works wonders to improve the mood and behaviour of someone with dementia.

Even when the usual means of communication become inhibited by the effects of Alzheimer's disease or other dementias, people experiencing memory loss still remember and respond to music.

While music can be powerful any time of year, familiar holiday tunes and hymns often have a lifetime of warm, poignant memories associated with them, making them particularly powerful for a loved one with dementia.

Try playing an upbeat song during the morning wake-up and shower routine. Or, play something soothing at mealtime and bedtime. See how it might lift your loved one's spirits and unlock memories from long ago.

Also keep in mind that music is not just for listening. It begs for participation. So sing or hum along with the music, clap your hands, tap your toe...and encourage your loved one to do the same.

A recent article on music in general said 'singing daily has a positive effect on one's mental state'. Next time you're driving in the car, don't be shy about turning on the radio and singing along. It can help relieve some of your stress and lift your spirits too.



Eat Well & Keep Warm During Winter Months

After a very mild start, winter is now making itself felt in the UK, as temperatures plummet and we have had snow and also continuous rain and gales. Winter can be especially difficult for elderly people, as they are vulnerable to illnesses such as colds, flu, chest infections, and even heart attacks and stroke, as the cold increases blood pressure. So keeping warm and eating well becomes even more important.

The ideal temperature for living rooms in winter should be 21C and 18C for bedrooms., but another important aspect of keeping warm and staying well during winter is to **keep eating well** and at **least one meal a day** in winter should be a hot one. It is important, therefore, to make sure that you have regular hot meals and drinks throughout the day in cold weather.

Keep cupboards, fridge and freezer well stocked with a good range of basic foodstuffs, so that even if you can't get out to local shop due to bad weather, you will have something to fall back on.

Carers provide wonderful prizes for Raffle at Cannock Group Christmas Party



This photograph shows just a few of the raffle prizes generously donated to the Cannock Christmas party. The raffle was organised by ladies from our Cannock Group, and the prizes they gave so generously, were just incredible. Tickets were sold at Hednesford and Cannock MASE Groups, but also to a few people outside the Groups. A staggering **£300** was the final total raised.

Our thanks and gratitude go to everyone concerned with the raffle and for the time and huge effort they must have put into making the raffle such a resounding success you are all **'FANTASTIC'!**

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

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