



Yes, You Can Live Well with Dementia

by Shelley Krupa, Business Operations Coordinator at Lake Hallie Memory Care

It has been ten years since my mom passed away from vascular dementia. We would have been more prepared for what was ahead if only I knew what I know now. Mom received her diagnosis four years prior, and the hope of living well with dementia was missing from our discussions. Days were often filled with doom, gloom, and fear as we waited and watched her health decline.

Several years ago, my dad began exhibiting early signs of mild cognitive impairment. He took a memory test willingly and then embraced an approach to life with dementia different from my mom because of his underlying health conditions.

My mom had risk factors - diabetes, obesity, HTN, and high cholesterol. My dad has a slight elevation in blood pressure and is approaching the pre-diabetic stages due to diet choices. He stays active, however, and is a living example to me that you can live well with dementia—yes, you can. Despite those challenges, he is a living example to me that you can live well with dementia—yes, you can.

A diagnosis of dementia is less likely to be revealed than a cancer diagnosis. People who learn of their diagnosis early in the stages of dementia are fortunate. The lack of early knowledge leaves many unaware of the options available to them and their loved ones. While an early diagnosis of Alzheimer's or related dementia may be scary to hear, think of it as your opportunity to live well with the disease.

Knowing early on allows you:

- Time to write down your wishes and plan for future care needs.
- Plan and talk with your physician about your concerns.
- To learn more about the disease and your risk factors.
- To learn about diet and the risks an unhealthy standard American diet has on your brain function.
- To learn how regular exercise helps your brain.
- To learn about vitamin deficiencies from the side effects of medications.
- To learn about your baseline memory skill measurements so you can monitor the effects of your lifestyle changes for the better.
- To learn about ways to cope with the changes.
- To find ways to continue enjoying activities.
- To learn about resources available to you.

In addition to support groups, keeping your brain active is one way to slow the progression of the disease. It's wise to seek out socialization activities free from awkwardness and stigma to help you live well and enjoy life.



A Memory Café is a place to connect with others in a safe, comfortable, and engaging environment. Guests laugh, learn, and remain socially engaged with others traveling the same journey. The activities vary based on the participants' interests. Individuals worried about memory loss or who have Mild Cognitive Impairment, those with early to moderate Alzheimer's or related types of dementia, along with their family members or care partners are welcome to attend.

Contact your local Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) for more information and the availability of Memory Café in your area.



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For more information on the application process, or to make a monetary donation to this 501(c)3 non-profit organization, please visit www.helpfulheartswi.org.



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