

Lessons Learned

25+ Years Behind The Scenes
of Dementia Care Decisions

Todd Shetter
Chief Operating Officer



Background

Weekly Meetings at Memory Care Communities over 25 years

- ▶ Dementia knows no barriers
- ▶ Caregivers come in all shapes and sizes
- ▶ Human nature prevails
- ▶ Isolation and acceptance
- ▶ If you've met one, you've met one
- ▶ Every problem has a solution

Thousands of stories from families just like yours

The struggles, the guilt, the realizations, and the relief

Lessons Learned

Caregivers

Drafted By Circumstances

- ▶ Caregiving is not a universal trait
- ▶ Timing/Location are not always the best
- ▶ You are NOT alone
- ▶ Seek out support
- ▶ YOU come first—YOU are the most important member of the team

Lessons Learned

Dementia Knows No Barriers

- ▶ Education
- ▶ Ethnicity
- ▶ Gender
- ▶ Age Range is Expanding
- ▶ Economic Status

Lessons Learned

Human Nature is a Strong Force

- ▶ Independence—Autonomy
- ▶ Honoring parents' /elders' wishes
- ▶ “I promised my husband/mother/father...”
- ▶ They are OK for now (denial)
 - ✓ Is it safe?
 - ✓ Could it be better?
 - ✓ What could go wrong?
 - ✓ Risk vs. confrontation

Lessons Learned

Guilt & Denial

- ▶ Suppresses important information
- ▶ Paralyzes progress
- ▶ Pushes away solutions
- ▶ Builds up...Blows up

Lessons Learned

Guilt and Denial

The Danger Zones

- Isolation: “Use it or lose it”
- Safety risks at home
 - ✓ Stoves/mechanical equipment
 - ✓ Steps & stairs
 - ✓ Furniture
 - ✓ Medications
 - ✓ Wandering
 - ✓ Scams/financial abuse

Lessons Learned

Breaking Through

- ▶ Ask a trusted friend for an honest assessment
“Give it to me straight”
- ▶ Get a second opinion—take it to heart
- ▶ **Ask for help**—make a few small decisions
- ▶ Create a plan and move forward

Lessons Learned

Warning Signs: Caregiver Burnout

Physical Health

- ▶ Caregiver's health begins to decline
- ▶ Risks of injury arises: lifting, transferring, combativeness, violence

Emotional Toll

- ▶ Resentment and anger are present all of the time
- ▶ Feelings of hopelessness, chronic fatigue and depression become routine

Lessons Learned

Warning Signs: Environment

The current living environment and the surroundings are no longer safe for the person with dementia:

- ▶ Stairs
- ▶ Exit seeking/gates/elopement
- ▶ Gas stoves/open flames
- ▶ Trip hazards

Lessons Learned

Warning Signs: Delusions

Profound memory loss and hallucinations

- ▶ No longer recognize spouse/family members
- ▶ Frightened by living in a home
- ▶ Increased paranoia or combativeness

Lessons Learned

What to Look For When Placing

- ▶ Designed for residents with dementia and memory loss
- ▶ An engaging activity program with participatory programs throughout the entire day
- ▶ Staff receives a higher level of training and support
- ▶ Nurses on staff 24 hours a day to evaluate/assess when there is a change of condition
- ▶ Physical plant is designed to be safe and secure to prevent wandering and resident injuries

Lessons Learned

Words of Wisdom

- ▶ Relief comes in seeking/accepting help
- ▶ Be kind to yourself
- ▶ Don't test or quiz
- ▶ Name the negative-“It's the disease”
- ▶ Little white lies-save the soul
- ▶ You are worthy & deserving of a break/time
- ▶ Don't question the past
- ▶ Look ahead & plan for change

Lessons Learned

Resources

ActivCare Communities

ActivCareLiving.com

(888) MEM-LOSS

(888-636-5677)

Council on Aging
Southern California

coasc.org

(714) 479-0107

Alzheimer's Orange County

alzoc.org

(844) HELP-ALZ

(844-435-7259)

Alzheimer's Association

alz.org

(800) 272-3900

Lessons Learned

Southern California Locations

Orange County

- ▶ **Laguna Hills**
(Opening in Fall 2021)
- ▶ **Orange**
- ▶ **Yorba Linda**

Los Angeles

- ▶ **Brittany House**
(Long Beach)

San Diego County

- ▶ **4S Ranch**
(Inland North County)
- ▶ **Bressi Ranch**
(Carlsbad)
- ▶ **Mission Bay**
(Pacific Beach)
- ▶ **Rolling Hills Ranch**
(Chula Vista)

888-MEM-LOSS
ActivCareLiving.com