Virtual Reality
Technology Teaches You About Alzheimer’s
If Alzheimer’s is in your life, help is within your reach.
TEAL TAKE - EDITORIAL

There’s an old joke; if con is the opposite of pro, is Congress the opposite of progress?

In today’s divisive political climate, many people unfortunately think so. Too often, bipartisanship, collaboration and working together seem to be the exception, not the rule. Ongoing political bickering and gridlock are causing frustration and disillusionment among people of all sides. It shouldn’t be that way, and it doesn’t have to be.

Fortunately, there are times when it isn’t. Look no further than the issue of Alzheimer’s to see what good can come from Republicans and Democrats working together.

On a “lighter” note, you can read about our Light The World in Teal program, which saw more than 300 structures around the world light up teal in 2018 to help raise Alzheimer’s awareness and show their support for all those affected by Alzheimer’s. We’re excited to have that program continue to grow this year!

As always, we hope you enjoy the articles included here and find them beneficial. If you’re ever interested in submitting a story for possible publication, feel free to email it to us at info@alzfdn.org.

Take Good Care,

Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr.
President & CEO
Alzheimer’s Foundation of America

PS: Your feedback is important to us, which is why we’ve created a survey where you can tell us more about content you’d like to see in future issues. Visit www.alzfdn.org/afamagazinesurvey to give us your input. We look forward to reading it!

The Model for Progress

Change is something I’ve always embraced. Nothing can improve or grow without change. I always encourage my family, friends and staff not to be afraid of change, because more often than not, it leads to something better.

In that spirit, I’m pleased to share with you, our loyal readers, that we’ve changed the name of AFA’s magazine from AFA Care Quarterly to Alzheimer’s Today. The magazine has grown tremendously over the years, and we’re very excited about this next phase. One thing that will never change, however, is our commitment to providing you with content that you find informative and helpful.

Many of the stories in this issue highlight positive changes that are occurring to help deliver education, care and support to the more than 5 million American families affected by Alzheimer’s disease.

In the fight against Alzheimer’s, Congressional actions have not been the opposite of progress, but instead a model for it. We hope that bipartisan cooperation continues, both in addressing the Alzheimer’s epidemic and other critical priorities facing our country.
"Denial and fear left me woefully uneducated and unprepared to deal with dementia. Letting my lack of knowledge paralyze me was a mistake, and I don’t want that to happen to anyone else."

Fighting dementia and helping others is not just a passion for journalist Tony Dearing; it’s his mission.

The cause became personal to him after his mother, Carla Dearing, was diagnosed with frontotemporal dementia, a “cousin” of Alzheimer’s disease, which accounts for 10-20 percent of those living with dementia. There is no known cause, no cure, and no disease-modifying treatment.

Following her diagnosis, Tony began having a recurring vision of himself in the future.

“I imagine that I’ve just finished my morning workout at the gym,” he describes the scene. “Now I’m standing in front of my locker, and my mind goes blank. No matter how hard I try, I can’t remember the combination.”

“If dementia could strike my mother, it could strike anybody,” he reflects—“including me."

Since the moment of that realization, Tony has worked to understand everything he could about brain function and dementia, what he could do to reduce the risk of cognitive decline and how to remain as mentally sharp as possible. Along his journey, his commitment expanded to help others by using his journalistic expertise to raise awareness about Alzheimer’s disease and helpful resources that are available.

For Tony, an understanding of his mother’s dementia came after a time of denial and his struggles to be a caregiver, followed by a long process of self-education.

“At first, I didn’t notice a change in my mother, but my wife did,” he recalls. While driving home from a visit with his parents, Tony’s wife Pei-Pei turned to him and asked, “What was going on with the iced tea?”

During dinner at their favorite restaurant, Tony’s mother had ordered a raspberry iced tea. But when it arrived, she didn’t want it, wouldn’t drink it and refused to accept anything else.

“Pei-Pei was more perceptive than I was,” Tony remembers. “She knew that wasn’t like my mother, and something was wrong. Her strange behavior at that dinner was but a hint of the horror to come.”

"After months of not having seen my mother, when she came to visit, nothing could have prepared me for what I saw,” he recalls. “I was looking into the eyes of a person I held so dear, and seeing nothing behind them. My mother, who had raised eight children, who had been so devoted to community service and had built a lucrative business, could barely put a sentence together. Every moment of that visit was an excruciating reminder of who she no longer was.”

Two years later, Tony stood in the pulpit of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Battle Creek, Michigan and delivered a eulogy for his mom, who died at 78 years old.

“The disease had stripped her mind and claimed her life,” he recalls sadly. Motivated by his mother’s journey with dementia, Tony decided to re-channel his grief into something positive.

Tony Dearing: A Man with a Mission

By Linda Saslow

“Denial and fear left me woefully uneducated and unprepared to deal with dementia. Letting my lack of knowledge paralyze me was a mistake, and I don’t want that to happen to anyone else.”

From his research, he has shared with his NJ.com readers the essentials of brain health, which include physical activity, a heart healthy diet, getting enough sleep, social interaction and mental stimulation.

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Tony continually emphasizes the importance of having a sense of purpose in daily life.

"We get purpose from our jobs and careers," he explains. "When people retire, it’s more important than ever to keep your mind sharp, to fill your day with things that are meaningful and that give you a sense of purpose. It could be taking up an old hobby or learning a new one, learning a musical instrument, taking a class, attending a lecture, volunteering—anything to challenge your mind with new and cognitively stimulating activities. One of the great intangibles in brain health is having a purpose in life, which lowers the risk of cognitive decline.”

Recognizing the needs and concerns of people with mild cognitive impairment, Tony developed GoCogno.com, a web site specifically targeted at that population. In addition, he does 5-minute videos on YouTube every Sunday, with helpful strategies for pathways to better brain health.

“I try to tell my audience something that they don’t know, because knowledge is power,” he explains. "It could be a suggestion for an adjustment in your diet, or a tip for how to make a New Year’s resolution that won’t fail.”

“What I’ve learned along my journey is that people fear dementia and deny it because they think that there’s nothing you can do. But that has changed. There are many things you can do to help keep your mind sharp and lower your risk of cognitive decline. If I can deliver that message, it is the ultimate tribute to my mother. There’s no guarantee that dementia won’t come knocking at my door. But I’ll be damned if I’m going to leave the door open.”

Tony (right) with (l-r) his mother, Carla; father, Jimmie; wife, Pei-Pei Hsu; and son, Adam on New Year’s Eve 2008.

“I knew that something good had to come out of my mother’s death,” Tony explains. "If I could use my journalism background to write about dementia, its effects and how it can be managed, that was where I could make a difference.”

Tony’s career in journalism dates back to junior high school, when he was named editor of the school newspaper.

“There was never any question from the time I was seven, that I was going to be a journalist,” he recalls.

From junior high to high school, college and local newspapers in Michigan where he lived, Tony continued to expand his experiences from reporting and writing to editing. In 2012, he was invited by the publisher and CEO of NJ Advance Media to join the team in New Jersey as the Director of News Operations, where his job description includes administration, budgets and human resources.

But as a journalist, Tony missed writing, and realized that as he was educating himself about brain health, he had an opportunity to use his expertise to help others as well. This revelation led to a series of columns about dementia, brain health and successful aging.

“We get purpose from our jobs and careers,” he explains. “When people retire, it’s more important than ever to keep your mind sharp, to fill your day with things that are meaningful and that give you a sense of purpose. It could be taking up an old hobby or learning a new one, learning a musical instrument, taking a class, attending a lecture, volunteering—anything to challenge your mind with new and cognitively stimulating activities. One of the great intangibles in brain health is having a purpose in life, which lowers the risk of cognitive decline.”

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Tony (right) with (l-r) his mother, Carla; father, Jimmie; wife, Pei-Pei Hsu; and son, Adam on New Year’s Eve 2008.
Everyone needs proper nutrition to be healthy, strong and comfortable; a good diet is essential to well-being. It’s no different for people living with Alzheimer’s. Fruits, vegetables, nuts and fish, for example, have antioxidants and Omega-3 fatty acids that can help boost brain health. What is different is their ability to eat. Because the brain is involved in all aspects of eating, when parts of it are damaged by Alzheimer’s, a person can have trouble eating. Loss of appetite, being unable to feed yourself or even forgetting how to chew and swallow are all ways Alzheimer’s can impact eating habits.

**What caregivers can do:**

**ENCOURAGE**
Individuals living with dementia may get distracted and lose interest in eating. It is important to encourage them to do so. A good way to spur their interest is by inviting them into or near the kitchen while foods are cooking—aroma is a powerful appetite stimulator. Limit the use of salt and sugar, but incorporate other spices and herbs to add flavor and stimulate taste buds. Include foods the individual has always liked.

**MAKE IT EASY**
Give only one food item at a time; a busy plate can be confusing. Serve courses individually on a single plate or in a single bowl. Use utensils that afford the person the best chance to have success at eating; for example, a spoon may be easier to use than a fork in terms of lifting food off the plate and up to the mouth. Consider using adaptive utensils, such as weighted cutlery, to assist a person with dementia in holding the fork or spoon independently. Pre-cut foods and finger foods are easiest to manage.

**BE SOCIAL**
Remember, meals are social events that we all enjoy! Take time to sit with the person. You can offer companionship and conversation, and if the person needs any reminders or assistance, you’ll be there to help.

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**Eating Tips**

**Think Safety**

As the disease progresses, people can have increasing difficulty with swallowing. Pay special attention to help ensure they do not choke on their food or beverages. Be aware of pace when feeding, and encourage drinks to assist. Incorporate the individual’s healthcare professional for a swallow assessment if there seems to be an issue, as well as advice on choosing foods that are best suited for someone who has trouble chewing.

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**RECIPE FOR YOUR HEALTH**

**BANANA OATMEAL CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES**

These vegan cookies are gluten-free if you choose oats and oat flour, which have not been cross contaminated by wheat. Look for gluten-free claims on the packages. The oats and oat flour are an excellent source of soluble fiber—good for those trying to manage high cholesterol. The recipe calls for only 1/3 cup sugar because the applesauce and banana add sweetness naturally. With the addition of walnuts, there is no need to add oil, butter or any other fat. Walnuts are an excellent vegetarian source of omega 3 fatty acids—the kind we need more of?

**INGREDIENTS (CHOOSE ORGANIC WHEN AVAILABLE):**

- 1 cup oat flour
- 3/4 cup old-fashioned rolled oats
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/3 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 1/3 cup raw sugar
- 1/3 cup natural apple sauce
- 1/3 cup plain soy milk
- 1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 ripe medium banana (about 1/2 cup), mashed
- 1/4 cup walnuts, finely chopped
- 1/3 cup semisweet vegan chocolate chips (such as Tropical Source)

**NUTRITION FACTS PER COOKIE (48 GRAMS):** 136 calories, 4.4 grams fat, 0 cholesterol, 137 mg sodium, 105 mg potassium, 22.7 grams carbs (7 grams sugar), 3.3 grams protein.

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. In a medium bowl, combine first 6 ingredients. In another medium bowl, whisk together applesauce, soy milk, and vanilla. Add wet mixture to dry ingredients and stir to combine. Fold in banana, walnuts, and chocolate chips.

2. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper. Scoop dough onto pan with a small ice-cream scoop. Bake 25 minutes or until golden brown, turning baking sheet halfway through. Let cool on a wire rack. Makes about 12 cookies.

Recipe and photo by Layne Lieberman, MS, RD, CDN, culinary nutritionist and award-winning author of “Beyond the Mediterranean Diet: European Secrets of the Super-Healthy.” For more information and recipes, visit www.WorldRD.com
Identity Theft and Alzheimer’s: How to Protect Your Loved One from Scams and Fraud

Identity theft is one of the top consumer crimes in the United States. More than 2.68 million people reported being victimized by identity theft in 2017 alone, according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Senior citizens are often a top target for identity thieves, and because of the way Alzheimer’s disease affects memory and cognitive capabilities, individuals living with Alzheimer’s are at higher risk of being exploited.

This past November, a Florida man living with Alzheimer’s disease had his identity stolen by someone who police allege rang up more than $50,000 in fraudulent charges. Last October, an Arkansas woman who worked at a care setting was arrested for allegedly using the identity of a person with Alzheimer’s she was caring for to open up a credit card and charge more than $1,000 in his name.

These are just two examples of the damage ID theft can cause. So what can family caregivers do to protect their loved one?

Start by talking with them. Reinforce not to give out personal information over the phone, especially their social security number, bank information or Medicare ID number. Scammers often will make unsolicited phone calls pretending to be a bank, credit card or insurance company or government entity to try and trick the recipient into giving up this information. Also remind them not to open the door to strangers.

Regularly check credit card and bank statements for suspicious or abnormal charges or withdrawals. Notify bank and/or credit card companies immediately of unauthorized activity. To help minimize the potential damage a thief can cause, consider lowering spending limits on credit cards and cancelling the ones that are no longer needed.

Reviewing credit reports periodically is important as well; this can help detect if someone is opening up accounts or applying for credit in your loved one’s name. Federal law entitles consumers to one free copy of their credit report from each of the three major credit bureaus (Equifax, Experian and TransUnion) per year, which can be obtained by visiting www.annualcreditreport.com.

Identity theft is not limited to just credit cards or bank accounts. Thieves can also use someone’s private information or health insurance number to get medical care, fill prescriptions or file insurance claims under that person’s name.
Caregivers should read medical and insurance statements regularly and closely, and make sure that the provider name, dates of service and the type of care provided are accurate, the FTC advises. Report mistakes or instances where the claims paid don’t match the correct type of care to your health plan immediately. Watch out for other warning signs, such as a bill for a medical service you didn’t receive, or collection calls or notices for a debt you don’t owe or recognize.

If your loved one becomes a victim of identity theft, it’s important to act fast. Report it immediately to help minimize the damage. The federal government has a website, www.identitytheft.gov, where victims can report identity theft and obtain step by step information to help guide them through the recovery process. Consider contacting your local law enforcement agency to get a police report; some business may require it to remove fraudulent charges from the victim’s account. Your state’s Attorney General’s Office and consumer protection agency can also be helpful resources.

Identity theft is something that can happen to anyone. Being prepared, educated and proactive are the best ways to defend against it and protect your loved one, and their finances, from harm.

Additional resources to learn more about preventing identity theft:
- Federal Trade Commission: www.ftc.gov/idtheft
- Consumer Financial Protection Bureau: www.consumerfinance.gov
- Credit Bureaus: www.annualcreditreport.com
- Your State Attorney General’s Office
- Your State/Local Consumer Protection Board

The AFA E-Store
Shop the AFA e-store to raise Alzheimer’s awareness, show your support and find caregiver products. Proceeds support AFA’s programs, services and research efforts.
Visit shop.alzfdn.org for more information!

Alzheimer’s Disease from “A to Z”

Come learn about:
- Signs and symptoms of Alzheimer’s disease
- How to communicate concerns
- Planning for care as you age

Upcoming Dates:
- Wednesday, April 3rd - Philadelphia, PA
- Tuesday, April 16th - Baton Rouge, LA
- Tuesday, May 7th - Washington, D.C.
- Tuesday, September 17th - Long Island, NY

Register or learn more at www.alzfdn.org/events or call AFA at 866-232-8484. Continuing education available for licensed social workers.

This program is approved by the National Association of Social Workers for two continuing education contact hours.
Virtual reality (VR) technology has long been thought of as an instrument for fun and fantasy, such as with video games. But now, virtual reality is being used in a new way; as an educational tool to help people better understand Alzheimer’s disease.

AFA has created a new “Dementia Experience” to help caregivers, families and the general public momentarily step into the shoes of someone living with Alzheimer’s disease. Letting people see things in a way that someone with Alzheimer’s might see them will ultimately increase awareness and heighten people’s understanding of Alzheimer’s disease.

“Technology can be a really effective teaching tool. Allowing someone to experience what living with dementia can be like, even for a few minutes, lets that person see and understand it far more effectively than reading about it on a piece of paper,” said Molly Fogel, LCSW, AFA’s Director of Education and Social Services. “Classrooms around the world are taking advantage of interactive technology to enhance learning and heighten understanding. We wanted to do the same to teach about Alzheimer’s.”

AFA’s Dementia Experience gives participants the opportunity to enter the world of “Harry,” a 76 year old retired veterinarian and widower living with mid-stage Alzheimer’s disease. Harry is a fictional person whose behaviors are based off of common ones among individuals living with Alzheimer’s disease.

Using VR technology and a Google Oculus headset, participants have a three-dimensional, 360 degree picture with sound that lets them see the world through Harry’s eyes. For three minutes, they join Harry as he starts his morning, doing routine tasks all of us do on a daily basis; waking up, brushing his teeth, and getting ready to begin the day.

Along the way, they see how Harry encounters a variety of symptoms a person living with Alzheimer’s may have. Visual and spatial disconnects, blurred vision and other sensory impairments are things the user will encounter. Dementia-related illnesses, particularly Alzheimer’s disease, can impact the way someone experiences their environment. Vision and hearing are two things that can be impacted by Alzheimer’s; more than 60 percent of those with Alzheimer’s will have a decline in some sort of visual capacity, and more than half of people over the age of 70 have a hearing impairment.

Confusion and disorientation are also common effects of Alzheimer’s disease that are part of the experience. Users will notice Harry improperly using items, having things out of place where they don’t belong, and not totally being aware of his surroundings.

The goal of AFA’s Dementia Experience is to help people better understand what someone living with the disease may be going through. Family and professional caregivers can gain greater insight of how to best work with individuals living with dementia-related illnesses, which can help them to raise the level of care they provide and take steps to improve the person’s quality of life. AFA’s Education and Social Services Department has used the learning technology at several educational programs with very positive results, and will be further expanding the program throughout 2019.

“Alzheimer’s disease is something that affects millions of Americans across the country; almost everyone knows someone, or will know someone, living with Alzheimer’s,” Fogel added. “Better understanding of Alzheimer’s disease helps to destigmatize it and enables everyone to improve the lives of the people affected by Alzheimer’s.”

Interested in learning more about AFA’s Dementia Experience? Contact AFA’s Department of Education and Social Services at 866-232-8484.
AFA’s Educating America Tour provides information regarding Alzheimer’s disease, brain health and dementia caregiving. All conferences are free and open to the public. Participants have the opportunity to interact with Alzheimer’s experts, ask questions, network and obtain a free memory screening.

For further information, contact the Alzheimer’s Foundation of America 866-232-8484 or www.alzfdn.org

2019 TOUR DATES

FEBRUARY 28
Las Vegas, Nevada

MARCH 12
Tempe, Arizona

MARCH 14
Denver, Colorado

APRIL 23
Nashville, Tennessee

MAY 10
New York, New York

JUNE 11
Portland, Oregon

JUNE 13
Seattle, Washington

JUNE 25
Minneapolis, Minnesota

AUGUST 6
Portland, Maine

SEPTEMBER 19
St. Louis, Missouri

OCTOBER 2
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

OCTOBER 22
Piscataway, New Jersey

2019 EDUCATING AMERICA TOUR

A
lzheimer’s and other dementias may impact everyday tasks that many of us take for granted, such as getting dressed. In the beginning stages of Alzheimer’s disease, a person may benefit from friendly reminders of where they put their shoes or pocketbook. As the disease progresses, cueing and supervision, and eventually the need for help with the physical act of dressing, will occur.

Here are some strategies caregivers can use to assist their loved one with dressing:

Allow for extra time when necessary. People with Alzheimer’s disease often need more time to dress. Because of the disease’s effects, they may become confused or overwhelmed with decision making. Be patient. If the person is having trouble regularly, consider steps such as handing them each piece of clothing individually, in the order it should be put on.

Be mindful. Because of the way dementia-related illnesses affect the brain, someone living with them may have difficulty telling you exactly what is wrong. As a result, it’s important for caregivers to pay attention to behaviors as a form of communication. If a person with Alzheimer’s is resisting certain types of clothing, or getting undressed at inappropriate times, it can be a sign that they are feeling discomfort for a variety of reasons; they could be in pain, too hot, or have a rash or infection. Ensure garments are soft, warm and are not restrictive. To avoid pain or discomfort, be aware of skin irritations, particularly on the neck, back, backside, elbows and heels.

Utilize flat and tag-less clothes. Tag-less clothing with flat seams on the inside is less abrasive to the skin. Choosing these types of items will help minimize skin irritation, pressure points, and bed sores.

Functionality is important. Clothing with openings in the back, or that is easily put on and off, can be helpful. Avoid constrictive items or items like high heels, which can potentially lead to a fall. If incontinence is an issue, adaptive pants with alternate waist and leg openings can make frequent visits to the restroom easier.

Your body language can help. Standing to the person’s side, rather than in front of them, may allow them to feel like they are being assisted, not confronted. Non-verbal cues, such as gentle touch, eye contact, or a smile can reassure the person that you are there to help.

Give the person a say in the process. Providing a degree of choice, such as “would you prefer this blue sweater or a green sweater?” is a way to involve your loved one in the decision making without overwhelming them with too many options. Stick with tradition when possible; choose clothes in the person’s favorite color or fabric, taking style cues from their past.

For more information, speak with one of AFA’s licensed social workers through our helpline at 866-232-8484 or connect digitally through our website, www.alzfdn.org.
Corporation study found that even if a cure or disease-modifying treatment for Alzheimer’s was found, America’s health care system is unable to rapidly deploy it or cope with the resulting surge in demand. Study findings indicate there are too few medical specialists to diagnose Alzheimer’s, particularly in the early stages when a new treatment could prevent the disease’s progression to full blown dementia. Additionally, researchers found an inadequate number of infusion centers where individuals can receive disease modifying treatment and medications.

The BOLD Act would help close these infrastructure gaps by applying a public health approach to Alzheimer’s disease. The goal of a public health approach is to provide the maximum benefit to the largest number of people in order to prevent disease, prolong life and improve human health. Similar action has been taken on issues such as vaccinations, improving water quality, smoking cessation and emergency preparedness. Utilizing this approach with Alzheimer’s aims to educate people about lifestyle changes they can make to reduce their risk of cognitive decline, as well as inform families affected by Alzheimer’s about available support resources and ways to improve quality of life.

Under the leadership of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Washington will deliver $100 million over the next five years for the prevention, treatment and care of Alzheimer’s disease. Enhanced resources for state health departments and greater help for health and social services professionals, families and communities as a whole are all part of this investment. BOLD also establishes Centers of Excellence in Public Health Practice to provide educational information about Alzheimer’s and brain health, as well as promote support resources for individuals with Alzheimer’s and their caregivers.

“Alzheimer’s disease is a public health issue, not a partisan one. It’s heartening to see Republicans and Democrats once again unifying to deliver meaningful results that will make a difference. We thank all of our federal representatives who supported this law and hope that they will continue taking action to fight Alzheimer’s throughout 2019, starting with additional federal research funding toward the cure for Alzheimer’s that millions of Americans are praying for every single day,” said Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr., AFA’s President & CEO.
Question 1

My mother has Alzheimer’s disease and I am her primary caregiver. I feel overwhelmed and want to hire home care attendants to assist with her care, but my brother is Power of Attorney and must give his approval. His reluctance to spend money on hiring outside help is an enormous challenge and source of tension. I really feel he doesn’t appreciate the 24/7 demands of being a family caregiver. How can I get him to understand why this is needed?

As your mother’s primary caregiver, you are observing the changes she is experiencing and meeting these growing needs. You might be learning the amount of caregiving is beyond what are you are willing and able to do. Everyone is different. Each caregiver must decide how much they can do and when they need help.

People who don’t provide direct care sometimes have trouble relating to caregivers’ experiences and truly understanding the complex needs of someone living with dementia. Caregivers can feel that others not involved in day to day care are taking their time and efforts for granted.

As Power of Attorney for your mother, your brother makes legal and financial decisions, including how and when money is spent on her care. He may be reluctant to spend resources now to ensure they are available in the future. Communicating with your brother is a priority, so you both can explain your reasoning and help each other understand all perspectives.

Holding a family meeting, either in-person or via phone/webcam, is a way to bring you, him and other relatives involved in your mother’s care together. Setting a realistic goal, such as collaboratively defining your mother’s care plan for the next six months, is the next step. During the meeting, allow each person to discuss their views, without interruption or judgment. From your perspective, share observable facts about your mother’s needs, and speak honestly about what you can, and cannot, do as a caregiver. While your brother has Power of Attorney, he is not in control of how much you commit to caregiving.

Partnering with a neutral third party, someone who can facilitate your family meeting and help you reach your goal, can also be helpful for resolving conflict. Geriatric care managers are experts on issues related to elder adults, including dementia; many have experience with conflict resolution and facilitation. You can contact AFA's helpline to learn more about geriatric care managers, including how to find one near you. While hiring a geriatric care manager is an out of pocket expense, it can be an excellent strategy for achieving family harmony and a care plan that you agree with. Elder law attorneys can also help navigate legal questions related to Power of Attorney or fulfilling your mother’s wishes. You may wish to include one as part of your mother’s care team.

Ideally, you and your brother will come to a resolution that you both feel is acceptable and serves your mother’s best interests. Remember, at the end of the day, you’re both on the same team!

Question 2

Everyone is different, so the “right way” to share your diagnosis with family, friends, and others is whatever way you feel is the best fit for you.

Sharing your diagnosis might feel uncomfortable, but there are many potential benefits. The sooner you open up, the sooner you can ask for help. Sometimes, keeping your diagnosis a secret can create additional stress for you and others. People in your life may have already noticed changes in your behavior and might be feeling concerned. Telling others what is going on can open the door for further conversations and assistance.

Creating a plan is a great next step, and could include who to speak to, when to have each conversation, and how much information you feel comfortable sharing. Consider how you are feeling and what you need; are you open to questions and discussing your situation in-depth? Or would you prefer to share some basic information and then not talk extensively about your illness? Feel free to be direct and share your preferences. Changing your preferences as time goes on is perfectly fine.

Thinking about specific ways that people can be supportive now or in the future can also be beneficial. Things such as attending a medical appointment with you, doing some future planning, or even watching a funny movie together—anything that can contribute to your well-being. You can also ask people in your life to help spread your news.

Consider thinking about different ways that someone could react to learning about your diagnosis. People could express a variety of feelings, and that’s ok. Family and friends may be unsure about the right thing to say. You could choose to address a negative response head on, in the moment, such as:

“I realize that this might be difficult news to hear. It was hard for me to hear it too. I am sad/angry/devastated/confused.”

“If you are wondering about the right thing to say, don’t worry about it.

We’ll figure it out together.”

I may be experiencing some changes, but I am still me.”

You can choose how, and if, to respond, but being aware of possible strong reactions may help lessen the emotional impact if they occur.

Finally, people in your life may not understand vascular dementia. Consider sharing some basic information about the disease, especially if you think it will help them learn more about what to expect and ways they can offer support.

Ultimately, you hold the power on how and when you share your diagnosis with family and friends. Do what’s best for you!
More than 300 landmarks around the world united last November 8th to raise Alzheimer’s awareness as part of AFA’s annual Light the World in Teal program.

Light the World in Teal is held each November as part of Alzheimer’s Awareness Month. Sites around the world illuminate in teal to shine a spotlight on the issue of Alzheimer’s disease. Since beginning in 2014, the number of sites “going teal” has grown from eight in the first year to more than 300 in the fifth.

Buildings from coast to coast across the United States and Canada, together with sites in Europe, the Middle East, Asia and Australia, lit up teal to raise Alzheimer’s awareness and show support for all those living with the disease. Sites included internationally-known landmarks like One World Trade Center in New York City, the Willis Tower in Chicago and LAX Airport in Los Angeles; government offices such as the Governor’s Mansion in Maryland (Government House); and a host of commercial and residential buildings. AFA member organizations, including residential care facilities, nonprofit organizations and Project Lifesaver International agencies took part as well.

You can view the list of 2018 participating sites at www.alzfdn.org/lighttheworldinteal.

Plans for the 2019 Light the World in Teal program are already underway! Visit www.alzfdn.org/lighttheworldinteal or call AFA at 866-232-8484 to register your site to “go teal” for Alzheimer’s awareness on November 7, 2019.
Researching a charity to support? Consider how far your donation goes!

88% of each unrestricted donation supports AFA’s programs and services.

100% of donations designated to research fund efforts toward a better treatment or a cure.

Donate today at www.alzfdn.org/donate