

BAI BEACON

The Newsletter from Family and Community Services
Banner Alzheimer's Institute
www.banneralz.org • (602) 239-6900
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Banner Alzheimer's Institute

September: The Month of Take Stock

While September finds most of the country winding down as preparations for winter begin, in Arizona we re-emerge from our pools and darkened TV rooms to embrace the out-of-doors. People who have avoided visiting the Valley for months are now cautiously returning and enjoying the slightly less-intense sunshine. Friends return from summer vacations and children return to school. Life becomes livelier and we remember why we moved here.

Yet with these changes and the shorter days, autumn is often a difficult time for people with dementia. Shorter days may lead to late day confusion. Restaurants and stores may be more crowded and there are more festivals and activities. Caregivers may find their person is less comfortable in crowds than last year or may actually refuse to venture out.

While there may seem to be few changes since last year, September is a good month to take stock. Is your person similar to last year at this time or have you noted subtle changes such as irritability in social situations, a decline in ability to tolerate noise, or wanting to leave social gatherings early? Has your person stopped some of the activities they have previously enjoyed? Were you able to help him/her find new things to do or are the activities being replaced with naps?

If you take stock and find that things have changed, what do you do? After all, dementia is a progressive disease... If you are noting decline it is a good time to contact the good staff at BAI. The medical staff can make sure that nothing of a medical nature is causing the change, while the Family and Community Services staff can help you find meaningful ways for you and your person to enhance life. Give us a call, 602-239-6900, we would love to hear from you!

Staging Dementia

You may have heard doctors and other caregivers talk about what stage a person with dementia is in. Words like "mild Alzheimer's disease (AD), mid-stage dementia, or Stage 6," are all different examples of terms that can be confusing for families. "Staging tools" were created in order to classify expected changes that take place over time in AD.

However, not all people progress in the same rate or in the same linear pattern. If the type of dementia is not AD, the staging tools may not apply. However, using stages allows for families and professionals to understand how everyday living is impacted and how to plan for the future. Typically, *mild dementia* refers to those who are still independent in most daily activities, but may need supervision for activities such as paying bills, shopping/ cooking, taking medications, etc. *Moderate dementia* affects individuals as they need 24-hour supervision and support. Memory loss and language difficulties increase, along with increased confusion. Activities such as grooming, dressing and eating now need more assistance. Finally, *advanced dementia* impacts overall function as the person now needs help for every activity as walking and moving freely is impaired and effective communication skills are lost. If you have further questions on this topic, please ask us.



“Ask the Expert”

by Geri Hall, PhD, ARNP

Dear BAI Expert:

I am beginning to feel like a policeman! First I had to take my husband’s credit card, then his checkbook, and then the car. He is always angry with me, complaining that I am controlling. I tell him when to bathe, what to wear, and when we eat. If I let him get the mail he loses it. How can I possibly make him understand why I have to do these things when I am as tired of hearing myself as he is? I don’t want to be a caregiver any more!

Signed,
“Burned out!”

Dear Burned:

First, know you are not alone. Every caregiver feels this way at some point during the disease. This is why support groups are so helpful, because no one who has not been a caregiver truly understands the demands and sorrows of the job. My first advice is to stop trying to reason with him. You did have to take the car, and cards, and checks.

Let him know you are genuinely sorry he is unhappy about it, but that his illness caused the problem.

My second piece of advice is to lighten up on some things, like when to bathe and what he wears. So what if he goes three days without a shower? If he needs to be clean to go somewhere make sure he knows he has to get cleaned up to do so. Let him choose what to wear most days – even if things don’t match. Make sure the dirty clothing disappears as soon as he dons his jammies. You have to choose your battles and mismatched clothing just isn’t that important.

Finally, it is time for some respite. Hiring a companion or enrolling your person in day care may seem expensive until you think about the cost of antidepressants and treating other stress-related illnesses. Ask your family for help and don’t take “no” for an answer. These are the dues adult children pay to belong to a family.

Final 2008 care partner MAPS program!



The final 2008 care partner MAPS program begins Thursday, Oct. 2 and runs each Thursday for eight weeks, 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. each week. Sessions held at Banner Alzheimer’s Institute.

Learn how to be a more effective care partner and have the opportunity to network and share ideas with other caregivers. Class fee is \$50 which includes all sessions, materials and snacks. For registration information, please call Banner Alzheimer’s Institute at 602-2639-6900.

2nd annual BAI Caregiver Research Conference November 8, 2008

Join us for “Progress in the Fight Against Alzheimer’s Disease: Promising Areas of Research,” Banner Alzheimer’s Institute’s second annual research conference to be held Nov. 8 at the Arizona Grand Resort in Phoenix. Syndicated *Dear Abby* columnist Jeanne Phillips will provide the keynote address. This trailblazing event is designed to update caregivers on the latest trends in Alzheimer’s disease research. Presentations are crafted for care partners & the community-at-large and time will be set aside at the end of the day for a question and answer session with an expert panel. Ms. Phillips’ mother Pauline Phillips, the original *Dear Abby*, has Alzheimer’s disease. Stay tuned for info on registering for this conference!

Beacon Bits

A reminder that we have new “business cards” available for our families to discreetly show to people who might misunderstand or misinterpret dementia-related behavior when out in public, such as at a restaurant or grocery store. The cards say: “My companion has a medical condition that affects memory and thinking. Your patience is appreciated.” To receive some of these cards, please contact Veronica Ellis at 602-239-6850.

Plan to attend! BAI Explorers outing! Thursday, October 21. **Tour Chase Field**, home of the Arizona Diamondbacks! \$18/pp includes tour and lunch! Call 602-239-6896 for additional info or to register.



Our Mission

To end Alzheimer’s disease without losing a generation, to set a new standard of care for patients and their families, and to forge a model of collaboration in biomedical research.