



*Arbors of Del Rey 03/27/06*

**Staying connected with individuals in the early stages of dementia:**  
***Let's give them something to talk about***

Arbors of Del Rey has a highly trained staff that knows the best ways to cope with the many problems that may surface when a person suffers from dementia or Alzheimer's disease. This is part four of a series that Arbors of Del Rey would like to share with the public to help them cope and let them know that they are not alone when it comes to Alzheimer's and dementia care. There are many resources and individuals that are here to lend a helping hand.

When it comes to visiting people in early stage of dementia, many family members and friends are just at a loss of what to do. The good news is that there are a lot of interesting things we can do to help us stay connected and keep their minds active and engaged too. The keys to success are to focus on things that are familiar to them and allow them to feel competent and avoid those things they obviously struggle with.

Word games are a good place to start and people of all ages like them. For people with dementia, word games that tap into long-term memory are your

best bet. Get a book of famous old proverbs, recite them aloud and then

have your loved one complete them (e.g. A stitch in time, saves \_\_\_\_\_. Nine). Then talk to them about the meaning of the proverb.

They also do well completing commonly known twosome and threesome – things that go together. Examples are horse and \_\_\_\_\_ (carriage) and tall, dark and \_\_\_\_\_ (handsome). You can also have them complete opposites like the opposite of light is \_\_\_\_\_ (dark or heavy). Don't forget similes, as strong as an \_\_\_\_\_ (ox or horse).

Other fun word games are reciting states, their capitals and clichés (Act your \_\_\_\_\_. Age). There are lots of expressions we all know that are associations with a lot of different topics like weather (When it rains, it \_\_\_\_\_. Pours); kitchen tasks (Peel the \_\_\_\_\_. Potatoes) and first few words of familiar songs (I'll be lovin' you \_\_\_\_\_. Always)

There are a lot of books available that contain many word games for adults such as *Mind Stretchers* by Beckie Karras and *Mind Joggers* by Sandy Minor, which are available through Geriatric Resources at (505) 524-0250.

Articles or books that can be used to generate opinions can create lively discussions. Two good resources are Ann Landers/ Dear Abby columns and a book called *You Be the Judge* by Nancy Dezan, which is filled with true, funny and controversial court cases guaranteed to make you shake your head in amazement. This book is available from ElderSong at (800) 397-0533. Reading aloud chapters from books written by well known, wise and humorous people like Bill Cosby, Erma Bombeck, Andy Rooney and Robert Fulghum can raise spirits and a lot of laughter. They're often filled with wit, wisdom and thoughts on common things

that are associated with normal daily life that everyone can relate to.

Since remembering the past is one of the strengths of people with early stage dementia, subscribing to magazines that recall past good times can elicit memories of things from the past that even families haven't heard. A good source that is filled with great photographs and stories is *Reminisce Magazine*, PO Box 5282, Harlan, Indiana 51593-4782. You can also reach them by phone at (800) 344-6913 or at their Web site at [www.reimanpub.com](http://www.reimanpub.com). Another good source is *Good Old Days*, PO Box 9008, Big Sandy, Texas 75755. Their number is (880) 829-5875 or you can e-mail them at [Editor@GoodOldDaysOnline.com](mailto:Editor@GoodOldDaysOnline.com). Don't forget books of best-loved poems that most of us had to memorize in school. They're fun to read aloud and reminisce about.

For those who love flowers and birds, *Birds & Blooms Magazine* is a wonderful resource filled with beautiful photos, lots of reader anecdotes and interesting short articles. They can be reached at PO Box 991, Greendale, Wisconsin 53129-0984, by phone at (800) 344-6913 or at their Web site at [www.birdsandblooms.com](http://www.birdsandblooms.com).

Perhaps one of the most overlooked things we can do with our early stage dementia loved ones is to capture their life stories while they are still able to share them. A wonderful resource to help do this or just to chat about past life experiences is the book *To Our Children's Children: Preserving Family Histories for Generations to Come* by Bob Greene and D. G. Fulford. It is filled with chapters of questions that are designed to elicit answers that form a patchwork of a person's fascinating personal history. It's published by Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group.

Many times we struggle to find ways to interact with loved ones in early stage dementia when it's the normal daily events of life that help keep all of us connected and that they remember the best.

Arbors of Del Rey is always here to help you or someone you love deal with the deterioration of the cognitive and physical abilities a person with Alzheimer's or dementia goes through. Opened in 1997, they are the only freestanding Alzheimer's and dementia specific facility in the area.

Arbors of Del Rey is dedicated to providing the best care for those suffering from Alzheimer's and other dementias. The process of the diseases can be extremely hard on the resident, their families and their friends.

Arbors of Del Rey is always there with information and support for the community.

If you or someone you know has a family member afflicted with Alzheimer's or dementia, there is a Support Group for you. The group is held on the second Thursday of every month at 12 p.m. at Mira Vista Villas located at 2141 North Solano Drive. Lunch will be provided and you are welcome to bring your loved one.

For more information about the assisted-living of individuals with dementing diseases or support for family members, please call Mary Lucero, Executive Director for Arbors of Del Rey at 382-5200.

Articles or books can be used to generate opinions and can create lively discussions with people that are in the early stage of dementia or Alzheimer's.