

From: [Stephanie Teague](#)
To: [Stephanie Teague](#)
Cc: [Noah Portugal NJP Accounting](#); [Benjamin Musser](#); [Becky Miller Real Estate Lead Share Piedmont Fine Properties](#); [Paul Klinger Tuesday Lead Share Chamber Of Commerce](#); [John Frazer & Mary Brown & Bigelow](#); [Caitlin Adkins](#); [Thomas Nicolai](#); [Fatima Attai](#); [Jan Sutton Sutton Insurance](#); [Judd Walls Constant Water](#); [Laurie Bersack & Joe IBDJ](#); [Lisa Berkema Piedmont Dispute Resolution Center](#); [Scott Bricker Lead Share](#); [Erin Lead Share Prospect Equine](#); [Alec Burnett](#); [Dennis Reitz Golden Rule Builders](#); [russ@luxcando.com](#); [ddonovan@bowmangaskins.com](#)
Subject: April 1 Tuesday Lead Share Minutes on Dementia
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Notes on Dementia Awareness

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- More than 6 million Americans are living with Alzheimer's disease.
- The initiative aims to help communities be more welcoming, friendly, and understanding to constituents living with dementia.
- Decals will be mailed out this week.
- George Worthington, Dementia Services Director at DARS, will be presenting.

Dementia Friendly at Work Training

- Developed nationally by Dementia Friendly America.
- Designed for people in retail, first responders, and anyone in a business setting who might encounter someone with dementia.
- Aims to raise awareness and understanding of dementia and provide communication tips and strategies.
- Will cover environmental considerations to make spaces more dementia-friendly.

Personal Experience with Dementia

- Most families in America know someone living with dementia.

Initial Thoughts on Dementia

- Common associations with the word "dementia" include:
 - Memory loss
 - Confusion
 - Disorientation
 - Paranoia
 - Mood swings
- These associations are predominantly negative.
- Suggestion to use a more positive word like "hopeful" due to ongoing research and new treatments.

Session Objectives

- Understand what dementia is.
- Learn the 10 warning signs of Alzheimer's disease.
- Get tips on creating a dementia-friendly environment.

Definition of Dementia

- Dementia is not a specific disease but a general term describing symptoms like memory loss, confusion, paranoia, and mood changes.
- Dementia is diagnosed when these symptoms interfere with daily life.
- Mild cognitive impairment is when these symptoms are present but don't interfere with daily life, and it can sometimes be a precursor to dementia.

Alzheimer's Disease

- Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia, accounting for 60-80% of cases.
- Many people have multiple pathologies, such as vascular issues alongside Alzheimer's.

Facts About Alzheimer's Disease

- Age is the biggest risk factor.
- At age 65 and above, about one in nine people have dementia.
- At age 85 plus, about one third of people have dementia.
- The number of Americans living with dementia is expected to rise to nearly 14 million by 2050 due to the aging population.
- Age-adjusted risk for dementia has declined recently due to better self-care practices.

10 Warning Signs of Alzheimer's Disease

- The goal is not to diagnose but to recognize when someone might be struggling due to cognitive decline.
- To help them navigate the organization or community setting more easily.
- In some cases, encourage the person to see a healthcare provider for assessment.
- The first sign is memory loss that disrupts daily life, especially forgetting recently learned information.

Other Signs of Alzheimer's Disease

- Forgetting important dates/events.
- Asking for the same information repeatedly.
- Increasingly relying on others for tasks they used to handle.
- Examples:
 - A customer walking out of a store without paying.
 - A customer calling repeatedly to refill an already filled prescription.
 - Someone relying on their spouse to answer questions they previously could answer themselves.

Challenges in Planning or Solving Problems

- Changes in ability to plan or work with numbers.
- Trouble following recipes or managing bills.
- Difficulty concentrating and taking longer to complete tasks.
- Example:
 - Saying they can't make their favorite cookie recipe because it "doesn't work anymore."
 - Turning in financial documents with errors and not understanding the mistakes.

Difficulty Completing Familiar Tasks

- Hard to complete daily tasks.
- Trouble driving to familiar locations or remembering game rules.
- Examples:
 - A cashier unable to count money in the drawer and blaming changes in procedure.
 - A driver getting lost and blaming changed street signs.

Confusion with Time or Place

- Losing track of dates, seasons, and time.
- Trouble understanding events not happening immediately.
- Examples:
 - Being confused about location and purpose in a grocery store.
 - Showing up for an appointment on the wrong day/time.

Trouble Understanding Visual Images and Spatial Relationships

- Difficulty determining color or contrast.
- Seeing differences in floor color as different levels.
- Can cause problems with walking and driving.
- Examples:
 - Multiple visits to a car repair shop for small dents.
 - Frequent falls.

New Problems with Words (Speaking or Writing)

- Trouble following or joining conversations.
- Stopping mid-conversation or repeating themselves.
- Struggling with vocabulary or using incorrect words.
- Examples:
 - Asking someone to read documents for them.
 - Pointing and asking for "that stuff over there."

Misplacing Things and Losing the Ability to Retrace Steps

- Putting things in unusual places.
- Losing items and being unable to retrace steps to find them.
- Accusing others of stealing.
- Examples:
 - A customer accusing the business of stealing their purse.

- Leaving paperwork behind in an office.

Decreased or Poor Judgement

- Poor judgment with money (giving to telemarketers).
- Less attention to personal grooming.
- Examples:
 - Taking out large amounts of money frequently.
 - Giving money to every charity that calls.

Withdrawal from Work or Social Activities

- (Speaker did not elaborate on this sign in the provided transcript.)

Withdrawal from Activities

- People with Alzheimer's may withdraw from hobbies, social activities, work projects, or sports.
- They may have trouble keeping up with favorite sports teams or hobbies.
- Social engagement is protective against cognitive decline.
- Normal aging involves occasional weariness, but those with Alzheimer's may stop engaging in activities altogether.

Changes in Mood and Personality

- Mood and personalities can change, leading to confusion, suspicion, depression, fear, or anxiety.
- Individuals may become easily upset at home, work, or in unfamiliar environments.
- Routine disruptions can be particularly challenging for those with Alzheimer's.
- Look for changes from the person's previous behavior and patterns that occur more frequently.

Personal Experiences

- One person shared that their mother, who had Alzheimer's, couldn't remember where the refrigerator was, even when standing in front of it.
- Another person noted that their mother with Parkinson's exhibited more impulsive behavior, suggesting cognitive issues.
- Parkinson's is linked with Lewy Body dementia.

Communication Tips

- Communication is a basic human right and should be maintained even with cognitive changes.
- Tone of voice and body language become more important as the ability to understand spoken language declines.
- Use a calm voice, avoid speaking too loudly, and ensure a quiet environment.
- Smiling and gentle humor can help the person feel more comfortable.

Body Language and Approach

- Approach from the front to make eye contact, as peripheral vision may be limited.
- Be mindful of body language, as people retain feelings and emotions longer than spoken language comprehension.
- Avoid standing above someone with arms folded, as it may convey frustration.

Speaking and Listening

- Speak clearly and be patient, as processing and responding can take longer.
- Use simple, short sentences and avoid asking too many questions at once.
- Provide options rather than open-ended questions.
- Minimize distractions and listen closely to understand the person's intent, even if words are unclear.

Showing Care and Responding to Distress

- Show you're listening and care by smiling warmly and making eye contact.
- Respond to signs of distress, such as forgetting where they live or how to get home.
- Contact friends, family, or, as a last resort, the police.
- Be aware that police may misinterpret cognitive decline.

Adapting to Change

- Watch for signs of change and offer help accordingly.
- Recognize that every day can be different, with changes occurring even from hour to hour.
- Adjust interactions based on the person's changing abilities.

Example of Reality Orienting

- Speaker's brother called his son's wife his sister at a family reunion.
 - The speaker corrected him, which seemed to frustrate the brother.
- Reality orienting used to be standard practice for people with dementia.
 - It involved trying to orient them to our reality.
- Understanding of dementia has shifted.
 - What someone with dementia experiences is real to them.
 - They have less brain power and might make mistakes, but it seems real to them.
 - Correcting them can make them feel like they failed.
- Now, the advice is to go along with the person unless it's dangerous.
 - People around them can adapt, but the person with dementia can't.

Ellen's Input

- Gently let people know that the person is experiencing cognitive impairment or memory loss.
 - This is easier than correcting them, which can frustrate them.
- "Let it slide. Let it slide. Yeah. Unless. Unless really somebody's going to be in danger somehow, so some. Or they're upset."

- If the person is talking to someone who's not there and seems happy, let them keep talking or redirect them.
 - Don't correct them or reorient them to our reality.
- Speaker's husband had imaginary visitors.
 - She would take them outside to get rid of them without telling her husband they weren't there.

Communicating in a Retail Setting

- People with dementia might forget to pay, have trouble finding things, have trouble making choices, or have difficulties handling money.
- Be patient and recognize that something might be happening.
 - If you know the person, contact their family.
 - If it's a small item, maybe let it go.
- Example: A woman left Walmart without paying for \$5 worth of items and ended up with a broken shoulder and a night in jail.
 - This resulted in a lawsuit against the police department.
- Be aware that older people might have cognitive changes.

Making Your Space Dementia Friendly

- Make your physical environment safer and more welcoming.
- Entrances should be clearly visible and understood as entrances.
 - Use a sign or clearly mark glass doors.
- Signage should be clear.
 - Use bold type (white on black or black on white).
 - Put signs at eye level and mount them on what they're trying to indicate.
- Avoid highly stylized or abstract images or icons on signage unless they're very common.
 - Signs for restrooms should not use themed language that could be taken literally.
- Consider having a unisex or family bathroom.
- Lighting.

Dementia-Friendly Spaces:

- Lighting: Entrances should be well-lit, using natural light when possible. Avoid bright light pools and deep shadows, which can appear as holes.
- Flooring: Should be plain, non-shiny, and non-slippery. Avoid bold patterns on carpets, curtains, or wallpaper. Plain walls and flooring are recommended. Keep floors flush, avoiding steps at doorways. If level changes are unavoidable, clearly mark them and ensure sufficient navigation space.
- Quiet Areas: Designate quieter spaces in restaurants, perhaps further back, with lower music volume and slightly brighter lighting.
- Seating: Provide chairs in retail spaces near the entrance for individuals with dementia to rest. Keep layouts free of clutter, as clutter can be difficult to navigate.

Addressing Dementia in Professional Settings:

- Wendy from Miracle Ear asks about reaching out to family members of patients with

dementia.

- It's important to check the hearing of people with dementia or cognitive impairment, as hearing loss is a significant risk factor.
- Each case is different; assess if the person is amenable to discussing concerns or if direct contact with a family member is more appropriate.
- Ellen suggests using the annual Medicare wellness check as an opportunity for cognitive assessment.

Real Estate and Vulnerable Clients:

- A real estate agent asks about resources for clients making poor financial decisions due to vulnerability, especially when there's a risk of scams.
- In Virginia, a person is considered competent until a court declares them incompetent.
- Adult Protective Services (APS) can be contacted in situations of suspected abuse, neglect, or financial exploitation.
 - Every county and independent city in Virginia has its own APS. Reports can be made directly, via a statewide hotline, or online.
- In imminent danger situations, involve the police. The state attorney general's office investigates scams.
- In Fauquier County, encompass community supports is the Area Agency on Aging and they have an aging services advisor. The APS is the Department of Social Services.
- Asking clients for a contact person in case you can't reach them is a good way to have a family member's number.

Questions and Thoughts

- Speaker usually offers people to come to their home or them to go to theirs and tries to remember to ask if they're allergic to cats.
 - Could also ask about steps due to split level before making the offer.
 - Probably should go to them.

Dementia Friendly Program Rollout

- The program has officially rolled out in Falkir.
 - There are quite a few Falkir businesses that are dementia friendly with local trainers.
 - Volunteers are available to come out to businesses for training.
- In Culpepper, there are over 60 businesses that are dementia friendly.
- Together, they try to connect all of the dementia friendly businesses.
 - Businesses will be listed as dementia friendly on the website.
 - Businesses can be on a mailing list to receive bulletins and share stories.

Appreciation and Resources

- Thanks to George for being available and doing the presentations.
- Handout available with communication tips and resources.
 - Includes aging together, encompass, and other statewide resources.
- Thanks to everyone for their time and interest in becoming a dementia friendly organization.

- Ellen and George are thanked for the practical tips.
- Email with any questions, and information will be mailed out.

Next Steps

- Jan will be the speaker next week.
- Refreshments are available in the coffee room.

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