

# Caring for the caregiver – recognizing and defining the problems

Presented by:

Jodi Lyons

CEO, SeniorSherpa

Board Member, Alzheimer's Association National  
Capital Area

[jodi@senior-sherpa.com](mailto:jodi@senior-sherpa.com)

[www.senior-sherpa.com](http://www.senior-sherpa.com)

# So, now you're a caregiver...

- ▶ What do you need to know if you're a caregiver?
- ▶ What do you do when patience isn't enough
- ▶ "Denial isn't just a river in Egypt"

# What do I do?

I help Seniors find the care they need  
throughout the country

# Key considerations:

- ▶ Who is in charge?
- ▶ Is this long distance caregiving?
- ▶ Medical conditions and Activities of Daily Living (ADL) needs
- ▶ Financial resources + planning
- ▶ Family support
- ▶ Legal planning
- ▶ Cultural and social preferences

# What scares my clients the most?

- ▶ Losing independence
- ▶ Going broke
- ▶ Living in a nursing home
- ▶ Alzheimer's
- ▶ Being lonely
- ▶ Being a burden to their children

# What scares the adult children/caregivers the most?

- ▶ Breaking a “promise” to a parent
- ▶ Parent harming themselves or others – driving
- ▶ Going broke
- ▶ Failing
- ▶ Losing their job
- ▶ Divorce
- ▶ Not being “there” for their kids



# Tools to lessen worrying

- ▶ MOLST/POLST
- ▶ Attorneys
- ▶ Financial advisors
- ▶ Patient advocates/care managers
- ▶ Physicians
- ▶ Religious leaders
- ▶ Tools for meaningful engagement

# Know what you're facing – the reality check

- ▶ With all the cards on the table, we can make a plan. Let's use Alzheimer's as an example...

# What is Alzheimer's Disease?

- ▶ Alzheimer's is the most common form of dementia and causes problems with memory, thinking and behavior. Symptoms usually develop slowly and get worse over time, becoming severe enough to interfere with daily tasks.
- ▶ Dementia is a general term for memory loss and other intellectual abilities serious enough to interfere with daily life.

# Know the 10 Warning Signs

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# Warning Sign #1: Memory loss that disrupts daily life

- ▶ One of the most common signs of Alzheimer's is memory loss, especially – short term memory.
- ▶ Others include forgetting important dates or events; asking for the same information over and over; increasingly needing to rely on notes or family members for things they used to handle on their own. (family members covering up)

## *What's a typical age-related change?*

Sometimes forgetting names or appointments, but remembering them later.

# Warning sign #2: Challenges in planning or solving problems

- ▶ Some people may experience changes in their ability to develop and follow a plan or work with numbers. They may have trouble following a familiar recipe or keeping track of monthly bills. They may have difficulty concentrating and take much longer to do things than they did before.

## *What's a typical age-related change?*

Making occasional errors when balancing a checkbook.

# Warning Sign #3: Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure

- ▶ People with Alzheimer's often find it hard to complete daily tasks. Sometimes, people may have trouble driving to a familiar location, managing a budget at work or remembering the rules of a favorite game.
  
- ▶ *What's a typical age-related change?*  
Occasionally needing help to use the settings on a microwave or to record a television show.

# Warning Sign #4: Confusion with time or place

- ▶ People with Alzheimer's can lose track of dates, seasons and the passage of time. They may have trouble understanding something if it is not happening immediately. Sometimes they may forget where they are or how they got there.
- ▶ ***What's a typical age-related change?***  
Getting confused about the day of the week but figuring it out later.

# Warning Sign #5: Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships

- ▶ For some people, having vision problems is a sign of Alzheimer's. They may have difficulty reading, judging distance and determining color or contrast, which may cause problems with driving.
- ▶ ***What's a typical age-related change?***  
Vision changes related to cataracts.

# Warning Sign #6: New problems with words in speaking or writing

- ▶ People with Alzheimer's may have trouble following or joining a conversation. They may stop in the middle of a conversation and have no idea how to continue or they may repeat themselves. They may struggle with vocabulary, have problems finding the right word or call things by the wrong name (e.g., calling a "watch" a "hand-clock").
- ▶ ***What's a typical age-related change?***  
Sometimes having trouble finding the right word.

# Warning Sign #7: Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps

- ▶ A person with Alzheimer's disease may put things in unusual places. They may lose things and be unable to go back over their steps to find them again. Sometimes, they may accuse others of stealing. This may occur more frequently over time.
- ▶ ***What's a typical age-related change?***  
Misplacing things from time to time and retracing steps to find them.

# Warning Sign #8: Decreased or poor judgment

- ▶ People with Alzheimer's may experience changes in judgment or decision-making. For example, they may use poor judgment when dealing with money, giving large amounts to telemarketers. They may pay less attention to grooming or keeping themselves clean.

*What's a typical age-related change?*

Making a bad decision once in a while.

# Warning Sign #9: Withdrawal from work or social activities

- ▶ A person with Alzheimer's may start to remove themselves from hobbies, social activities, work projects or sports. They may have trouble keeping up with a favorite sports team or remembering how to complete a favorite hobby. They may also avoid being social because of the changes they have experienced.

## *What's a typical age-related change?*

Sometimes feeling weary of work, family and social obligations.

# Warning Sign #10: Changes in mood and personality

- ▶ The mood and personalities of people with Alzheimer's can change. They can become confused, suspicious, depressed, fearful or anxious. They may be easily upset at home, at work, with friends or in places where they are out of their comfort zone.
- ▶ ***What's a typical age-related change?***  
Developing very specific ways of doing things and becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted.

# Now what?

- ▶ Assemble your team
- ▶ Get your legal house in order (POAs, Advanced Directives/Living Wills, etc)
- ▶ Get your medical house in order (MOLST, medical quarterback, DNR, emergency plans)
- ▶ Get your financial house in order... Medicaid is NOT a financial plan!
- ▶ Get consistent caregiver support in place

# Common sense stuff that drops by the wayside

1. Pets.
2. Valuable items . Did Mom hide any money in the pages of the books? Jewelry in the freezer?
3. The house: Make sure it is properly maintained. If the house is completely uninhabited for a long time, stop the mail, put the lights on timers and do not leave the car in front of the house where it never moves.
4. The car. Keep? Sell? Donate? Lose it at the airport? Just don't leave the car in front of the house if you are not going to move it regularly—it is a big sign for thieves.
5. The plants.

# Contact info

- ▶ Jodi Lyons
- ▶ [jodi@senior-sherpa.com](mailto:jodi@senior-sherpa.com)
- ▶ [www.senior-sherpa.com](http://www.senior-sherpa.com)

# THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

- ▶ Taking care of yourself – including building cognitive and emotional reserves!