

Online community is a rich resource for caregivers of people with dementia

By **Molly Carpenter**

Evelyn remembers when her husband started wandering. He would always end up at the nearby fire station. Firemen would sit him down, and get him a cup of coffee while they called her. One morning he disappeared, but the firemen hadn't seen him. Instead, they found him at the church, in his pajamas.

Wandering is just one behavioral symptom of Alzheimer's—a disease that threatens to overwhelm more and more family caregivers and robs those who have it of their independence.

The number of people worldwide living with dementia illnesses such as Alzheimer's disease is set to nearly double every 20 years, reaching 65.7 million in 2030 and 115.4 million in 2050, according to Alzheimer's Disease International.

Statistics are one thing, but personal stories like Evelyn's are another. If you know someone who has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's, you likely have seen firsthand the fear and many challenges families experience when faced with associated behavioral symptoms.

Home Instead Senior Care developed a new book, *Confidence to Care: A Resource for Family Caregivers Providing Alzheimer's Disease or Other Dementias Care at Home* (<http://googl/8dkdWR>), and a free mobile app based on the book's content, to provide family caregivers with practical insights to understanding, managing and preventing the behavioral symptoms associated with Alzheimer's.

Online Insights Provide Tips

Home Instead Senior Care tapped into its network of family caregivers and clients—people with considerable insight from the Home Instead Senior Care online community—to provide helpful tips to other families who are coping with Alzheimer's. "Remember for Alzheimer's," a Home Instead Senior Care Facebook page, has nearly 250,000 actively engaged family caregivers who post some of the challenges of this disease and dementia.

Drawing from the expertise of this pool of family caregivers, as well as industry experts, the book is organized by chapter around more than 20 behavioral symptoms associated with Alzheimer's and other dementias, including aggression, agitation, bedtime struggles and wandering.

Each chapter begins with a personal story, like Evelyn's, followed by an explanation of what might cause the behavioral symptom, care approaches to minimize the symptom, conversation starters to help a family caregiver feel comfortable and tips on ways to help prevent the behavioral symptom from recurring. In the chapter on wandering, caregivers could learn about care ap-

proaches such as how to simplify the environment, locate examples for how to redirect a conversation (“Where are you headed? Can I join you on your walk?”) and find prevention tips on safety-proofing the home and other like methods.

The book also explains how unmet physical, emotional, social and environmental needs can trigger behavioral reactions. If a person is cold or hungry or in pain, they may show their caregiver by pacing or becoming agitated. Because the brain is failing, this is their way of telling the caregiver what is wrong. It’s possible to prevent behavioral symptoms by understanding such possible triggers. Also addressed are potential challenges of personal care (bathing, dressing, eating and drinking).

Caring for the Caregiver

Caregivers are often the most neglected member of a family living with Alzheimer’s. *Confidence to Care* includes a section on caring for the caregiver, which helps the family caregiver focus on what he or she can control.

“I think every doctor who makes a dementia diagnosis should be required to give this book to the spouse,” said Herb Glazer, who is caring for his wife of 58 years who has Alzheimer’s. “I wish I’d had it years ago.”

The book and mobile app are designed as a one-stop resource to arm family caregivers with the tools they need to confidently keep a loved one with Alzheimer’s or another dementia at home. Visit ConfidencetoCare.com to order this book, and download a free *Alzheimer’s & Other Dementias Daily Companion* mobile app. ■

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