



Yesteryear, **NOT YESTERDAY**

BY JEAN BACHHUBER AND JEN KLUG

You've embarked on the Alzheimer's journey, where yesterday's memories may disappear quickly but the details of school days remain clear. You might not know what lies ahead, but you can help your loved one get there with a sense of value and belonging if you travel back in time and reminisce with them.

The hippocampus is the part of the brain that plays a major role in learning, memory, and emotions. It's one of the

first areas affected by Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, which explains why one of the first indications of the disease is repetition of thoughts and the inability to create new memories.

Knowing what we do about the brain and how it's affected by Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, we realize how reminiscing can have such a positive, powerful impact.

Reminiscing Restores Identity and Sense of Self: Connecting the Best Moments from the Past to Conversations Today.

Those living with Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia may start to lose interest in being part of their regular social circles as holding conversations becomes increasingly difficult. They can feel isolated and disconnected from family and friends as they struggle to understand and respond appropriately.

Through conversations that focus on the past and reminiscing, our loved ones with memory loss can find joy and success in social settings. It's up to us as caregivers, family members, and friends to change how we communicate with our loved ones. When we do, we'll see a stronger sense of belonging and interest in being part of the social circle. They will not regain any cognitive loss, but reminiscing can help to improve self-esteem and feelings of inclusion.

Mood Lasts Longer than Memories.

Reminiscing about the good old days can bring great joy, happiness, and positive emotions for those living with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. While the details of the stories may be gone a short time after the conversation ends, the feelings that were connected will linger much longer. Being in a good mood and enjoying these moments together is a quality of life that those living with memory loss and their loved ones can cherish.

Reminiscing Therapy Engages the Senses.

There are four methods for successful reminiscing therapy.

1. Aural. Music, poems, prayers, and other familiar sounds can evoke positive memories from the past. You might be surprised when you turn on an old tune from the 1930s or '40s and your loved one can sing along, remembering every word. Music and Memories is a popular program in assisted living and memory care communities.
2. Visual. Photos, paintings, and objects that have meaning from the past are also powerful in bringing about positive feelings. Pull out those old photo albums and ask about the pictures and what was happening at that time. There's often great joy in the walks down memory lane, paging through pictures that were taken when film still needed to be developed.

3. Smell and Taste. When deciding on the menu for a meal, choose comfort foods from the past. Those with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia will enjoy foods that remind them of when they were growing up. You might find a summer afternoon to pick raspberries (like the raspberries our loved ones picked in the backyard growing up) and make homemade jam just like they did years ago.

4. Tactile. Bring back memories of great feelings through tangible objects. An old quilt, a painting that hung on a wall, a dog leash for someone who had pets growing up, or pet visits may stir up positive thoughts, stories, and memories.

Reminiscing focuses on memories held dear. You'll be glad you found the music, asked the questions, and talked about those good old days. You might want to get a notebook and start writing down what you hear, or even record your loved one as they reminisce with you.

As caregivers, it's important we adjust our communication to avoid causing frustration and to provide positive experiences for those who have Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia. We can recapture the emotions that are an integral part of our loved ones' memories. As we continue on this journey, find great joy from yesteryear and not yesterday.

Jean Bachhuber is the director of memory services and Jen Klug is regional director of customer service at Oak Park Place. oakparkplace.com



Jen Klug

ALZHEIMER'S/ DEMENTIA/ MEMORY CARE

It's important to be educated on the various supportive programming and living environments to find the best place that fits the progressive needs of an individual. See the Alzheimer's & Dementia section for additional resources and refer to Wisconsin Department of Health Services at dhs.wisconsin.gov/dementia.

This category is designed to provide information on housing options tailored to the special needs of individuals with memory/dementia concerns. These communities foster secured environments with specially designed programs and regulated care.

ALL SAINTS NEIGHBORHOOD MEMORY CARE

8210 Highview Dr., Madison 53719
(608) 827-3029

jessica@elderspan.com
allsaintsneighborhood.org

Lovely studio apartments with specialized, person-centered care for those with Alzheimer's or other memory challenges. Experienced nurses, care staff, and activity staff provide individualized services and dignified assistance to support seniors and their families.

ASTER SENIOR COMMUNITIES

111 & 139 E. Reynolds St.
Cottage Grove 53527
(608) 333-9306

asterseniorcommunities.com

Our memory care community provides dignified, personalized care in an engaging environment that is comfortable, secure, and failure free.

ATTIC ANGEL COMMUNITY

8301 Old Sauk Rd., Middleton 53562
(608) 662-8842

Katie.Gruber@atticangel.org
atticangel.org

The Haven, Attic Angel Community's memory care residence, provides peaceful and supportive living for adults with Alzheimer's or related forms