

SAGE DEMENTIA CONSULTING

A 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Serving Alameda and Contra Costa counties

Supporting family members and professionals who care for individuals living with dementia with education on person-centered care.

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(925) 788-2640; SageDementiaConsulting.org



Welcome, Summer

As summer arrives, many of us look forward to spending time with family, enjoying the outdoors, and creating meaningful memories. For families affected by dementia, these moments can bring both joy and unique challenges.

That is why this issue focuses on practical ways to support safety, connection, and quality of life this season. You will find helpful tips for staying safe during the warmer months, including strategies to prevent dehydration and reduce wandering risks.

You will also learn about an important concept in dementia care: focusing on what people can still do, rather than what they have lost. This strengths-based approach, championed by renowned dementia educator Teepa Snow, reminds us that every person living with dementia continues to have abilities, emotions, and a deep need for purpose, dignity, and connection.

At Sage Dementia Consulting, we believe education empowers us to better support those living with dementia. By understanding the changes dementia brings, while also recognizing the abilities that remain, we can create more positive interactions and more meaningful moments for all. ■

Warmly,
Gia



GIA BARSELL, CDP
Chief Executive Officer
Sage Dementia Consulting



Dementia and Summer Safety

Summer brings opportunities for outdoor activities, family gatherings, and enjoying the sunshine. However, warmer temperatures can present unique challenges for people living with dementia.

Individuals with dementia may not recognize when they are thirsty, overheated, or fatigued. As a result, they are at greater risk for dehydration and heat-related illnesses. Care partners can help by offering fluids regularly throughout the day, encouraging rest breaks, and planning outdoor activities during the cooler morning or evening hours.

Summer can also increase the risk of wandering. Longer days, open doors, and increased activity around the home may create opportunities for a person living with dementia to become disoriented. Consider checking door alarms, ensuring identification is readily available, and reviewing safety plans with family members.

While it's important to take precautions, summer can still be a wonderful time to create meaningful moments. Enjoying music outdoors, gardening, sharing an ice cream cone, or simply sitting in the shade together can provide comfort, connection, and joy. ■



Connection Idea

Create a simple summer memory basket with items like seashells, seed packets, sunscreen, or family photos. Familiar objects can spark conversation and meaningful engagement.



Our Services—How Sage Dementia Consulting Can Help

Sage is a nonprofit organization dedicated to improving the lives of those affected by dementia through education, support, and consultation. Our services include:

- Dementia **education programs** customized to the audience, be it family care partners, professional caregivers, staff of assisted living facilities who would benefit from dementia-care training, and community organizations.
- Individual and family **consultations** to help navigate the care challenges.
- Virtual caregiver **support groups** that provide connection, encouragement, and practical guidance.
- **Resources** and tools designed to help caregivers build confidence and improve quality of life for those living with dementia.

We work with both family caregivers and professional care providers to provide guidance and best practices on caring for individuals living with dementia.

If you're looking to learn more about how dementia affects the body and mind, how to overcome dementia-related care challenges, or need emotional support, visit SageDementiaConsulting.org. ■

During the summer months, people living with dementia may be at greater risk for dehydration than the average older person. **Dementia can affect a person's ability to recognize thirst, remember to drink, or find a beverage nearby.**

Simply placing a glass of water next to someone may not be enough. Vision deficits including a narrowing field of vision is a common occurrence. That's why a person with dementia may not notice a beverage placed on a chair-side table—they may not actually see it because their peripheral vision has diminished. Or, because of declining cognition, their brain may struggle to process what the glass of liquid is for, even though it's an everyday object.

Rather than asking, "Are you thirsty?" or "Do you want something to drink?" try offering a beverage in a natural, inviting way: "Here's some cold lemonade," or "Let's have a smoothie together."

Hydration can also come from foods with a high water content, such as watermelon, strawberries, grapes, cucumbers, oranges, popsicles, soups, and smoothies. Offering small amounts of fluid throughout the day is often more effective than expecting someone to drink a large quantity all at once.

Using brightly colored cups, offering favorite drinks, and modeling drinking yourself can provide helpful cues that make hydration feel more familiar, inviting, and enjoyable, too.

A few simple adjustments can make a meaningful difference in helping a person living with dementia stay hydrated, healthy, and comfortable during the warmer months. ■



Thank You, San Ramon Valley Kiwanis!

The team at Sage extends sincere gratitude to the SRV Kiwanis Foundation for its generous support of our mission. We were awarded a grant to help us continue providing dementia education, caregiver support, and other valuable resources to individuals and families throughout our community.

It was a privilege to attend the recent award presentation and meet individuals whose dedication to community service continues to make a positive impact throughout our region. We are honored to partner with organizations that share our commitment to serving others and improving the lives of those affected by dementia. ■



Focusing on Abilities Rather Than Losses

When someone is diagnosed with dementia, it is natural to notice the changes that are occurring. Family members may observe increasing forgetfulness, difficulty managing daily tasks, or changes in communication. Over time, it can become easy to focus on what has been lost. Yet one of the most helpful shifts caregivers can make is to begin looking for what remains.

Dementia changes the brain, but it does not take away all abilities at once. Many people living with dementia continue to enjoy meaningful activities, express emotions, build relationships, and participate in daily life. A person may no longer be able to manage finances or prepare a complex meal, but they may still be able to fold laundry, water plants, sort objects, listen to music, dance, help set the table, or share stories from the past.

Focusing on retained abilities creates opportunities for success rather than frustration. When we invite someone to do something that matches their current abilities, we support independence, confidence, and a sense of purpose. Even small accomplishments can provide a feeling of value and belonging.

This approach also changes the way we interact with people living with dementia. Instead of concentrating on mistakes or correcting inaccuracies, we can look for ways to connect, engage, and build on strengths. A person may struggle to remember names or dates, but still enjoy humor, affection, music, faith traditions, favorite hobbies, or time spent with loved ones.

One of the most important things to remember is that a dementia diagnosis does not erase the person. Their life experiences, preferences, emotions, and need for connection remain. By focusing on abilities rather than losses, we can create more positive interactions and help individuals continue to experience joy, purpose, and dignity throughout their dementia journey.

The next time you spend time with someone living with dementia, try asking yourself, "What can this person still do?" The answer may open the door to meaningful moments and unexpected successes. ■



Hope on the Horizon: A Simpler Path to Diagnosis

One of the most exciting developments in Alzheimer's care is the growing availability of FDA-cleared blood tests to help physicians evaluate whether Alzheimer's disease may be contributing to a person's memory and cognition changes.

Until recently, diagnosing Alzheimer's often required expensive PET scans or a spinal tap to look for changes in the brain. While those tests are still important in some situations, new blood tests offer a less invasive option that may help doctors determine who needs further evaluation.

These tests are designed for people who are already experiencing symptoms, not for routine screening of healthy adults. They also do not provide a diagnosis on their own. Instead, they are used with a medical history, cognitive testing, physical examination, and, when needed, imaging.

Getting answers early can help individuals and families plan ahead, access appropriate treatments, and connect with education and support sooner. This news is another encouraging step forward in the evolving field of dementia care. ■

Self-Care Reminder

Caring for yourself is not a break from caring for someone else—it is part of how love is sustained. You are allowed to rest. Your care, your patience, and your presence matter—and so do you.





How We Fund Our Services

Sage Dementia Consulting is a non-profit 501(c)(3) charitable organization, tax ID 93-3481871. With the help of grants, fundraising events, and generous donations, we are able to offer our supportive services at low- or no-cost. Your contributions help us provide personalized consultations, educational workshops, and care-planning guidance for families navigating the complexities of caring for a loved one with dementia. Donations to Sage are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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Ways that you can help us serve the community:

- Make a one-time or recurring donation at our website.
- Satisfy your retirement plan's required minimum distribution (RMD) by setting up a Qualified Charitable Distribution (talk to your financial advisor).
- Make a tribute/memorial donation. We can make the gift known to the family of your honoree.
- Attend our fundraising events (coming soon).
- Serve as a Sage volunteer (contact us for more info).
- Share information about our services with your family and friends.
- Invite us to speak at your workplace, place of worship, or organization to help raise awareness.



Meet the Team



Gia Barsell, CDP
Chief Executive Officer, Founder
giab@sagedementiaconsulting.org

- ▷ PAC™ Advanced Dementia Consultant and Trainer
- ▷ National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners
- ▷ Certified Montessori Dementia Care Professional®

Gia has been working with persons living with dementia and their families since 2013. As Dementia Services Manager at Hope Hospice, she educated families and clinical care staff on best practices for dementia care, including non-pharmacological approaches to responding to behavioral challenges. She also has extensive experience facilitating support groups for families of those with a dementia diagnosis. Gia's goal in founding Sage was to ensure that all community members have access to the guidance and support necessary to improve the quality of life for those living with dementia and their care partners.



Debbie Emerson, MS, CDP
Health Educator, Founding Partner
debbie@sagedementiaconsulting.org

- ▷ CARES® Dementia Specialist (Alzheimer's Association)
- ▷ National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners
- ▷ Certified Montessori Dementia Care Professional®

Debbie has worked in the Tri-Valley community as a health educator for over 35 years. Prior to joining Sage, she developed and managed Hope Hospice's Family Caregiver Education Series, a program designed to provide education, resources, and support to family care partners. She also co-developed Hope's Living with Dementia program, for which she provided training and support services to families and healthcare professionals. In addition to her professional training, Debbie's most valuable experience has come from her many years as a care partner to family members living with dementia.

Connect

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Sage is a 501(c)(3) non-profit,
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