



In Good Company

Winter 2007

A Cure with No Side Effects

By Julianne Roth

Recently I received one of those emails from a friend that had a link to watch a funny animated video clip. It was one of the most clever that I have ever seen. In fact, not only was it funny, but also it was thought provoking. It poked fun at how we as a society are so quick to pop a pill for whatever ails us. My personal position on pill-popping is right in line with that tongue and cheek video clip. I am a medical centrist. I rarely take an aspirin for a headache. In fact, I always try to resort to a natural cure for a health problem prior to resorting to any type of pharmaceutical cure. That being said, I also believe that there is a time and a place for everything, and I certainly would listen to my doctor and take any appropriate treatment for a life-threatening disease or injury.

When I gave birth to my first child I discovered that medical interventions were not always the best solution. In hindsight, it was as if each intervention had a side-effect which required the next intervention. Had I not had the first intervention, I might have had the natural birth experience I truly wanted. It makes me wonder how often we take a pill for one thing that causes us side effects for which we need to take more pills.

When I look at the published statistics of our elderly in the United States and see that over 50% of the population over the age of 65 is depressed, it makes me scratch my head. Isn't this the land of opportunity? Aren't these the golden years? What is causing our senior population to be so down? My belief is that frequently unhappiness in one or more areas of a person's life leads to "dis-ease". All too often doctors are quick to write a prescription for an antidepressant when a patient is feeling blue. Just look at the amount of money the pharmaceutical companies are making for these medications (and look at the side effects too).

I am certain that there are a number of factors that lead to depression among our elderly... health issues, financial woes, loss of loved ones, loss of independence, and boredom just to name a few. I know that these are real and valid concerns, and while there isn't much Companions for Living can do in regards to one's health (although we can recommend a couple of great doctors in West Hartford who really take time with their patients) or one's financial woes (other than refer clients to a good financial manager or two), there IS something we can do to help in the other areas.

Companions for Living is more than just your typical companion service. We are focused on helping a client to LIVE.

We take a holistic approach to homecare by engaging our clients cognitively, emotionally and physically. When I started this company I was determined to take a holistic approach to the individual and offer value on top of keeping someone safe. This approach led me to design a Life Coaching program that is revolutionary in homecare. Life Coaching is focused on re-engaging a person in activities they enjoyed when they were younger, healthier, etc. as well as helping them to explore activities they have always wanted to try. The process is all about keeping our clients active and involved. The populations we have seen benefit the most from this program are those with earlier stages of memory impairment diseases, as well as those who have recently become widowed – particularly if they were the primary caregiver. Life Coaching is accomplished in just 2 sessions, is very reasonably priced, and can have amazing and long lasting effects. It makes an invaluable gift for a loved one.

I know that it is sometimes just plain easier to pop a pill, and in some cases that might be the right thing to do. However, in most cases, eating nutritious foods, drinking lots of water, getting the proper amount of rest and becoming active again, can do the trick. Let us help. See the discount coupon on the back of this newsletter, and call us to find out more about Life Coaching and our other services at 860-413-9306.

CFL Helps the Alzheimer's Assn.



From left to right: Betsy Van Loon, Terisha Grote, Julianne Roth and Jay Gallant

On a very wet and rainy day in October, Team Companions for Living took a soggy walk several times around Bushnell Park with a number of other individuals and teams for the Alzheimer's Association Memory Walk. Companions for

Living raised just under \$1000 in contributions from clients, caregivers, friends and a company contribution. We look forward to raising even more for this worthy cause next October!

Keeping the Faith

By Betsy Van Loon

Before I started working with Companions for Living, I was a nursing home visitor for many years accompanied by my dog Noite. These caring visits were sponsored by my church through a program called Stephen's Ministry. In order to learn more about visitation and pastoral care, I enrolled in course through Andover Newton Theological School. As part of my course work, I read a wonderful article with a not so wonderful title. It is: "Pastoral Care of Problematic Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Affected Residents in a Long Term Care Setting" by Rev. David Wentroble.

Rev. Wentroble has led Christian worship services for people with Alzheimer's and dementia for many years. He has some great advice on reaching out to touch the spiritual nature of people who seem to have lost that dimension of their lives. His ideas are applicable to people of any faith tradition. Research has shown that religious activities continue to be very important to people with Alzheimer's disease and can help them cope with their dementia and memory loss. Family, loved one's and caregivers have to be very creative in order to provide religious activities that continue to be meaningful. Fortunately, familiar rituals can offset even severe impairments of memory. Even if someone with Alzheimer's does not have a firm grasp on the present, they may easily remember songs and prayers learned in childhood.

If religious activities are (or were at some time in their life) important to someone you know, make sure they are attending appropriate services in their local place of worship, nursing home or assisted living facility. You can supplement these gatherings with music, prayers and scripture reading of your own. This does not need to be formal and you don't need to be a minister, rabbi or priest. During visits sing a familiar

hymn or religious song, recite The Lord's Prayer or Shema, and read from scriptures such as the 23rd psalm or another familiar passage. I visited with an elderly Catholic woman for years. I am Protestant and I had her teach me the rosary. She would recite it to me each visit and I helped her hold the beads.

As one's words and cognitive ability fade, symbols of faith can still elicit responses. The appearance of a cross, a Star of David, touching a Bible, a prayer book or a rosary can spark emotions that connect to the religious activities of the past. Rev.

Wentroble suggests making a reminiscence packet for your loved one with Alzheimer's or dementia (see insert). Bring one or more of these objects with you when you visit.

Having your loved one hold and touch these kinds of familiar objects or listen to a familiar

prayer or song can be a unique way of communicating when words are fading. This can be very reassuring to someone with Alzheimer's. The memories of comforting religious activities can long outlast orientation to current time and place.

Protestant: Bible (New King James Version), cross, traditional picture of Jesus, prayer cards for: The Lord's Prayer, 23rd Psalm, Ten Commandments and Numbers 6: 24-26.

Jewish: Prayer book, yarmulkes, tallit, mezuzah, Star of David, Kiddush cup, and candlesticks.

Catholic: Crucifix, rosary, scapular, sacred heart badge, statue of Mary, prayer cards for: The Lord's Prayer, 23rd Psalm, Ten Commandments, Apostle's Creed, Hail Mary, Magnificat, mysteries of the Holy Rosary and prayer to the Sacred Heart.

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