

# THE GUIDED LIGHT

LA CROSSE COUNTY'S DEMENTIA NEWSLETTER FOR  
HOPE, SUPPORT, AND RESOURCES

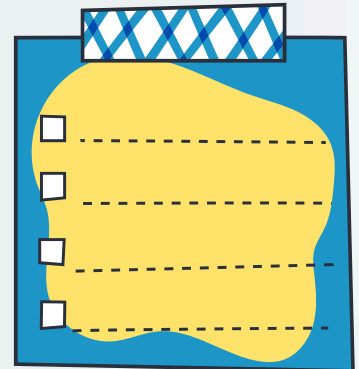
## Engagement for the Brain

Everyone benefits from activities and engagement, a fact that holds true from birth to the end of life, particularly for individuals living with dementia. Since activity engagement encompasses a wide range of options, it's simple to find something enjoyable to do with or offer to your loved one. Everyday actions can positively impact brain health, potentially reducing the risk of cognitive decline. For those experiencing neurocognitive degenerative diseases (like dementia), engagement can lead to decreased challenging behaviors, help maintain independence, and foster a sense of purpose, all of which promote positive emotions. Engagement, often referred to as "activities," goes beyond just games and crafts; it can also include exercise, daily living skills, household tasks, or time spent enjoying favorite hobbies. When selecting activity for your loved one, it's essential to begin with their previous or existing interests and abilities. However, don't stop there! Explore new options and try activities multiple times —because, often, individuals may find joy in things they would not have previously considered. In the La Crosse area, numerous engagement opportunities are available, and this edition aims to help connect you to them.



### Tips for Success

Often it can be difficult to come up with activities that work for your loved one. But it is important to remember that almost anything can become an activity and can be initiated at any time. Remember that activities do not need a lot of preparation or have to have an outcome (produce a tangible end). Here are some tips to get you started:



- Be flexible and patient (they may not be open today or right now, try again later)
- Encourage independence during daily living tasks (brushing teeth - grab brush, combing hair - holding for you, putting on clothes - picking one of your two preplanned options)
- Avoid Correcting and focusing on the outcome of the activity (engagement in any aspect of the process is activity!)
- Simplify things, help set up or provide structure and be available for support (think of how we help young children break down things to be successful, do the same here)
- Establish a familiar routine with activity (they become used to and familiar with it)
- Respond to feelings and adjust based on feedback
- Provide positive encouragement and feedback along the way (thank you for helping!)



## Independent and At-Home Ideas

Sometimes it can be challenging to get out of the house for certain events and activities. Providing activities at home can be a great solution for someone who has dementia. The great thing about at home activities is that they do not need to be elaborate and most of the time they can be finding ways to incorporate your loved one in daily living activities. These can help keep your loved one engaged, reduce sun downing later and also provide them with a sense of purpose. You can try these with your loved one or ask a friend, schedule respite, or a neighbor to come over to participate with your loved one.

Here is a list of ideas:

- Scavenger hunt (look outside for something green, something round, and something smooth)
- Sorting coins, cards or silverware
- Involve them in small tasks of a household activity (cleaning, laundry, cooking, etc.)
- Games like checkers, cards, chess (even if they can't play, they can fidget and move them, group them, sort them)
- Puzzles
- Tell stories from the past, use pictures to start conversation
- Gardening (pulling, planting, handling items, raking)
- Walking
- Chair exercises (youtube or picture cards can provide ideas)
- Utilize the following community resources for at-home activity:
  - Library Caregiver Connection Activity Kits  
Available at all La Crosse County Libraries (608-399-3390 ask for your closest library Holmen, Onalaska, Campbell, West Salem, Bangor) and City of La Crosse Library (608-789-7100). Different themes and contents, check out one or all. Call library to reserve.
  - Caregiver Comfort Closet  
Complimentary items for a variety of caregiving needs. Call the ADRC to inquire about particular needs or interests and see if the closet has a resource that could be of benefit to you. 608-785-5700.

The possibilities are endless! Do you need extra support or ideas? Call the ADRC to discuss your unique situation: 608-785-5700.

### ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

If you want more ideas and information about at-home activities check these out:

Article: <https://www.aplaceformom.com/caregiver-resources/articles/dementia-activities?msocid=3822372fa6106a141f07232ca7646bd9>

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWtOJVTNTYw>



## Community Engagement Programs

*Our goal is for families to thrive in their communities, so we strive to connect them with local resources to address social, emotional, physical, and spiritual needs and stay engaged. There are many others going through a similar situation, and it can be some of the most fun and rewarding times together in this journey. Check out the wealth of opportunities available right here in the La Crosse area!*

- **Coulee Region Giving Hearts Choir (\$) (<https://givingheartschoir.org/>)**  
A group for those in the early to mid-stages of Memory Loss along with care partners current and past, that come together to share a love of music. No musical talent required. Call Choir Director for information 608-792-8608
- **SPARK!**  
Free creative engagement programs for people with early to mid-stage memory loss and their care partners. Designed to keep participants actively engaged by providing experiences that stimulate conversations and inspire creativity.
  - SPARK! at Clearwater Farm (Onalaska, WI). Call 507-319-9155  
[www.clearwaterfarm.org/programs/spark/](http://www.clearwaterfarm.org/programs/spark/)
  - SPARK! On the GO! (La Crosse, WI). Call 608-385-4819 <https://endalzfest.com/>
  - MAMM SPARK! (Winona, MN). Call 507-474-1910 <https://mmam.org/spark>
- **Brain & Body Fitness Program (\$) (STAR Association)**  
An evidenced-based exercise, cognitive stimulation and social program. The goals include improving fitness, mood and maintaining function. For schedule and to register, call (608) 797-6295
- **EXPAND Program (UW-La Crosse)**  
A physical activity program specifically designed for individuals with neurologic disorders. Participants work with PT students to meet goals for health & function. For more information contact: 785-5072 or 608-785-8470.
- **Embrace (ADRC and La Crosse Parks & Rec. Dept)**  
Offers small group socialization and enrichment for persons with dementia, including monthly musician, to maintain physical, social, emotional and cognitive skills. Care partner support and education is offered in a separate room during each session. Register with La Crosse Park & Rec: 608-789-8640
- **Memory Camp (EndAlz Fest and OASIS Respite)**  
Respite care with a camp experience for loved ones with dementia in the beginning to mid stages. Held 3x annually. Each camp features unique weekly in/outdoor learning activities, lunch, and socialization. Call for schedule: 608-780-0471.
- **Oasis Respite (\$) (Causeway Caregivers) [www.oasisrespite.org](http://www.oasisrespite.org)**  
Trained professionals and volunteers provide supervision, lead activities, and serve a nutritious snack while caregiver takes time 'off'. Participants socialize with others while enjoying a variety of stimulating activities. Call 608-780-0471 to schedule.
- **A Time for Joy Respite (\$) (Immanuel Lutheran - Viroqua)**  
For people living with dementia in the middle stages. Participants engage in social activities such as music, exercise, large group activities and art. Call 608-637-3983.



# MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

January - February - March 2025

*Don't Miss These Unique Programs This Quarter*

- **Winter Memory Camp** - Tuesdays 10:30a-1:30p Jan 14, 21, 28, Feb 4, & 11 The Nature Place La Crosse. Free. Each day has in/outdoor activities, lunch, and socialization. Register: 608-780-0471 (all or as your calendar permits)
- **Brain & Body Fitness Mondays and Wednesdays 2:45-3:30p** STAR Center 1011 La Crosse St. Register 608-797-6295
- **Men's Shed Jan. 28, 1-3:00p** Tomah Senior Center Register 608-785-5700
- **Kinship4Caregivers Tues. Feb. 11, 10:30am-Noon.** The Nature Place La Crosse. Register 608-785-5700. Session will focus on health and spiritual wellbeing with information and instruction from Julia Johnson MS, HWC, Spiritual Wellness Coach that includes experiential opportunity and tips for managing 4 pillars of health - diet/exercise/stress/sleep.
- **Healthy Living with MCI Education Series - Friday March 14th 9:00-11:30am** at Black River Beach Neighborhood. Education from researchers and Light Food/Beverage with discussion following-Open to public. Those with MCI encouraged to attend. Program begins at 9:30am. Register: 608-785-5700
- **Caregiver Education - Caregiving 101 Tuesday March 4th, 1:00-2:30pm** Holmen Area Community Center. Register 608-785-5700
- **Savvy Caregiver Education Mondays April 7th-May 19th, 9:00-11:30am** at First Free Church Onalaska. Register 608-785-5700

## Navigating Together

**Join us**

Support Group for Caregivers of Loved Ones on the Dementia journey. Engage in open and honest discussions about the daily challenges you face with others who understand exactly what you're going through.

3rd Thursday of the Month  
1:00-2:00pm  
Holmen Area Community Center

## MEN'S DEMENTIA CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

1st Monday of the Month (no Holidays)  
9:30-10:30am  
First Lutheran Church - Onalaska (410 Main St.)

Facilitated by former caregivers. Open to men caregiving for a loved one with dementia.

Questions? Call the ADRC 608-785-5700

## Local Caregiver Grant "Caregiver Wishes"

For caregivers of a loved one living with Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia. EndAlz Fest Caregiver Wish Grants worth \$1,000.

**More info. and To Apply:**  
<https://endalzfest.com/>

**FOR MORE LOCAL ONGOING dementia friendly programs, social activities, caregiver support or education...**  
**Stop by or Call Aging & Disability Resource Center of La Crosse County 608-785-5700**