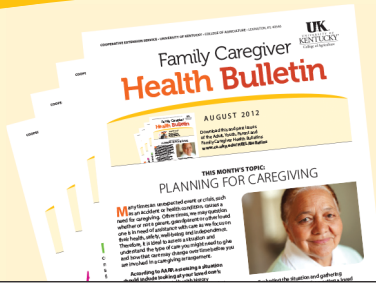


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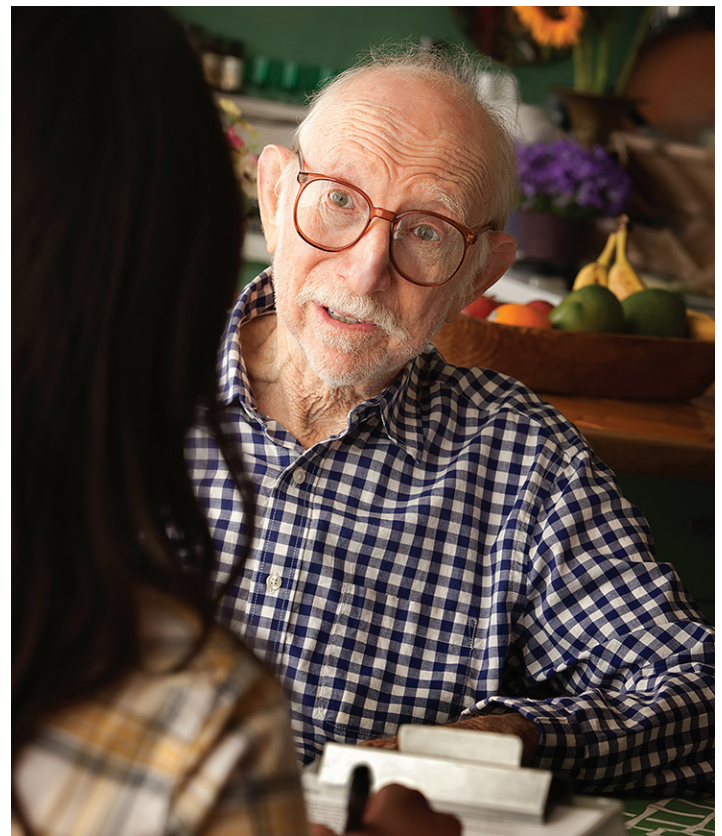


JUNE 2014

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THIS MONTH'S TOPIC: MEMORY BANKING

According to the Alzheimer's Association, of the 43.5 million adult family caregivers who care for someone more than 50 years of age, 14.9 million care for someone who has Alzheimer's disease or other dementia. Few programs, however, prepare individuals to serve as caregivers for older adults or to be care receivers in old age. This lack of preparation can lead to increased burden and distress. With challenging conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, caregivers may wonder if they are able to provide the best care should it become necessary. On the other hand, individuals diagnosed with dementia may become concerned about whether they will receive the best care. The University of Kentucky Family and Consumer Sciences Memory Banking program is a life story program that can be used as a caregiving tool. The program helps build the necessary skills to



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Reminiscing encourages individuals to think about personal experiences, knowledge, concerns and desires.

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collect, document and maintain life stories and health histories as a way to maintain identity and personhood.

Memory Banking is unique in that it promotes caregiving as a two-way street. Both caregivers and care-receivers work together to develop individual stories and identities by recording and sharing their personal life stories and health histories. Such effort helps each partnership better understand each other as well as enhance communication, legacy building, brain activity and mental health. As a tool, life story has the potential to benefit both the caregiver and care receiver by improving knowledge and creating a sense of support and connection. In regards to memory loss and caregiving and the effort to reduce or prevent distress, documenting life story may be most effective in the early stages of the disease. Intervening at the early stages of dementia can strengthen the process of caregiving through the disease process and provide a sense of action at a time often associated with hopelessness.

Through life story, individuals can communicate important memories of situations, events, feelings, emotions and meanings toward worldviews, behavior and decisions. Reminiscing encourages individuals to think about personal experiences, knowledge, concerns and desires. This can prevent late-life depression and improve wellbeing. Learning how to effectively document a life story can promote and improve quality care by establishing a foundation of personal knowledge that helps explain and justify behaviors, wishes and decisions. A person's life story, especially a sincere understanding of a person's life, can help informal caregivers recognize that a family member is more than a disease and can assist the care receiver in better understanding the individual who has taken on the caregiver role.

For more information on life story and the Memory Banking program, contact your county Extension Agent.



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Family Caregiver
Health Bulletin

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