



DEMENTIA CARE  0

## Bringing Joy to Alzheimer's and Dementia Care – Interview with Sandra Stimson

BY [BRECON GAGE+](#) · JANUARY 23, 2014

*"It's impossible to create a perfectly wonderful day, but you sure can create perfectly wonderful moments." - Jolene Brackey, author of Creating Moments of Joy*

For families experiencing a loved one slipping into Alzheimer's or dementia, there is no easy solution to the challenges these diseases bring. But there may be some room to hope. Though it may feel lonely at times, there are strong and loving women and men, like author Jolene Brackey and our expert today [Sandra Stimson](#), who shine light into dark corners. And as cliché a metaphor as that may be, women such as these bring joy to circumstances where sadness is often much more common than joy.

We recently caught up with Sandra Stimson, for an interview, to gain some insight into Alzheimer's and dementia care. **Sandra is an expert in dementia education and health care** and the executive director for the [National Council of Certified Dementia](#)

[Practitioners](#) (NCCDP) and the International Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners (ICCDP).

As you'll see, this woman has a heart of gold (so Neil Diamond can stop searching), and shares kind and wise words, in particular if you have family with Alzheimer's or dementia.

Here is what she had to say:



**What makes you passionate about senior care/why did you get involved in senior care?**

"I absolutely love the health care field and working with people. We are all aging so we all have to be involved and concerned about issues affecting the older adults.

Regardless of the industry you have chosen to work in such as home care, hospice, adult day care, hospitals, rehab facilities, nursing homes, assisted living, foster senior care, senior centers, independent living, hospitals, associations, government agencies supporting the health care industry or a family member providing care; aging affects all of us.

We all have to be concerned about the care that is provided and what we as a society can do to make it better. We all have to get involved at the local level to see within our own towns what we can do to make it possible for our older citizens to age in place where they live and insure there are enough services available where they live to make this possible. We see Alzheimer's disease and Dementia Education as very important not only for the care providers, front line staff , health care professionals but also very important for the first responders and clergy within the community."

**Are there any books you recommend seniors (and their family members) read regarding senior care?**

"There are so many resources available. Of course the Internet is endless in the abundance of resources and we certainly recommend [our web site](#) for not only resources but also for free staff training in-services which includes power point and hand outs. There is a fantastic book we always recommend called Creating Moments of Joy and is a must read for anyone working in the health care industry as well as the caregivers providing care in the home. This book addresses entering the dementia person's reality and live their truth, providing moments of joy and truly knowing the person you are caring for. It also gives excellent communication tips and tips for repetitive questions."

- Author of *Creating Moments of Joy*, [Jolene Brackey](#), speaks with passion about her work with seniors with Alzheimer's and Dementia.

### **What is the most indispensable advice you can give to someone with an aging parent who needs to start receiving care?**

“Do your homework and prepare in advance for what is to come prior to needing care. Be aware of the services and what they are such as support groups, home care, hospice services, nursing homes, adult day care, assisted living, senior centers, Office on Aging, etc.

If you are overwhelmed and do not know where to begin then it is best to reach out to a Geriatric Care Manager or a Professional Patient Advocate who can help guide you and advise what services you need for what ever you decide to do. Also educate yourself about the loved ones illness. But most important, do not cut yourself off from your friends and family who are your support system.”

### **What should family members do to locate local resources that can provide assistance to them and their loved ones?**

“There are many networks out there that list all of the support groups in the country. Network with your local support group because your peers who are facing the same challenges can also make recommendations. For those who have loved ones with a diagnosis of dementia, we recommend the [National Alzheimer's Association](#), National Alzheimer's Foundation and of course our organization [National Council of Certified Dementia Practitioners](#). Almost every illness today has an organization which will have tons of information about the disease or illness and support services.”

### **What would you say are one or two major mistakes made by family caregivers?’**

“I would not say it's a mistake but there are two things I would recommend regardless of providing care directly for a loved one or they are a long distance care provider.

One is to not cut off your support group of friends and family. Continue going to your functions that brought you joy. Care giving is not about becoming joyless. Once you cut your support system off sometimes it is hard to get those back. So continue with your bowling club or prayer group. Find time for yourself.

The second thing is not asking for help or denying help when it is offered. When someone offers to help take them up on it. Sometimes you are so overwhelmed you are not even sure what to ask for. So keep a list on your refrigerator of things people can do to help you such as mowing the grass, going to the grocery store, providing respite time, cleaning your house or

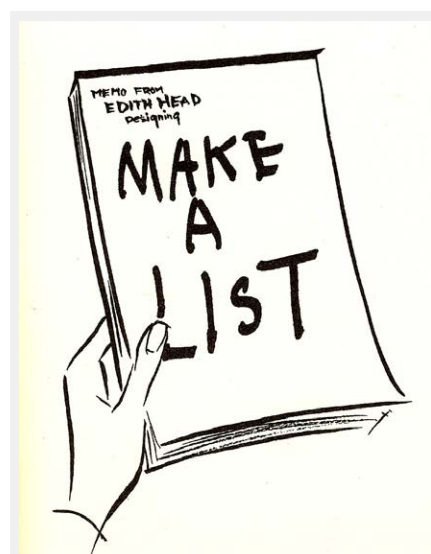


Image courtesy of [Tiny Banquet](#) on flickr.

doing your laundry. Friends and family want to help so let them. It makes them feel useful and you won't feel so overwhelmed or isolated.”

### **What do you think is one of the biggest challenges for seniors currently? And how should it be addressed?**

“The number one diagnosis facing the older population is dementia and Alzheimer’s disease is the leading dementia diagnosis. They will face challenges providing in home care, financial struggles as well as the challenges of making the right decisions which is overwhelming. I think the biggest challenge is also making an informed decision for placement of a loved one because now there are so many options and what the best option is for the loved one and for the family, as in home care, adult day care, CCRC, assisted living, nursing home, foster adult home care, senior living community, etc.

We have a wealth of services also available now from monitoring devices, wandering / elopement monitoring, cameras in home, senior van services, in home health services such as respiratory services, nursing services, granny pods, security services, pharmacy delivery services, grocery store service. Builders are building smart homes and ADA equipped . All of these choices though daunting will help assist the care giver with the challenges. Caregivers need to remember that they are not alone and more now than ever there are many services and options available and they are not in this alone.

Each community needs to look at what services are currently offered in the community and look at services and businesses they need to bring to the community so that the older population has these options and services available to them.”

Thanks again Sandra.

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