

PVMCI

The Quarterly Newsletter of the Pioneer Valley Memory Care Initiative | Autumn 2024

QUARTERLY

PVMCI is funded by The Eisenberg Family Trust and is made possible in part by a grant from Highland Valley Elder Services through funding under the Federal Older Americans Act. Participants sometimes ask how you can support PVMCI. If you are interested in donating, please call 413-582-2256.

Welcome to our Fall Newsletter

I lived in San Francisco for a few years after college and I loved the beauty of the city and the surrounding areas. However, I really missed the four seasons in New England, particularly the fall. It is still my favorite time of the year. We plan our weekends around what drives we want to take, based on where the peak foliage is at the time. I hope everyone here has had a little time to enjoy the beauty of the fall season.

In this lovely fall edition, we highlight two valuable books about dementia. The books are quite different from each other but both address the importance of self-compassion and self-care along this journey. Sharon Asher gives great tips on how “autumn offers a unique opportunity to find solace and beauty amidst the responsibilities of

caregiving.” We provide a delicious and easy recipe for overnight oats; in the fall, I love to add cubes of apple and cinnamon. You can be as creative as you like with this recipe.

We welcome Ryan Lewis to our PVMCI volunteer team. Ryan is a second year

interfaith chaplain student who appreciates the importance of spiritual care. He brings his wealth

and breadth of experience to everything he does.

We conclude with a variety of fall activities which can be done with everyone including Memory Cafes. The PVMCI memory café is held at Northampton Senior Center.

Wishing you a lovely November,

Rebecca Starr, MD

Medical Director, PVMCI

*“Every leaf speaks bliss to me,
falling from the autumn
tree.” ~ Emily Bronte*



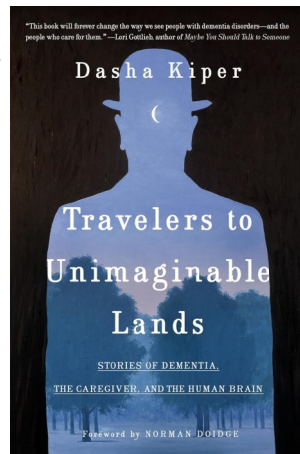
Have You Read It?

Travelers to Unimaginable Lands: Stories of Dementia, the Caregiver, and the Human Brain

By Dasha Kiper

Inspired by Dasha Kiper's experience as a caregiver and counselor and informed by a breadth of cognitive and neurological research, *Travelers to Unimaginable Lands* dispels

the myth of the perfect caregiver. In these compassionate, nonjudgmental stories of parents and children, husbands and wives, contending with dementia disorders, Kiper explores the existential dilemmas created by this disease: a man believes his wife is an impostor; a woman's imaginary friendships with famous authors drive a wedge between her and her devoted husband; another woman's childhood trauma emerges to torment her son; a man's sudden, intense Catholic piety provokes his wife. Kiper explains why the caregivers are maddened by these behaviors, mirroring their patients' irrationality, even though they've been told it's the disease at work. By demystifying the neurological obstacles to caregiving, Kiper illuminates the terrible pressure dementia disorders exert on our closest



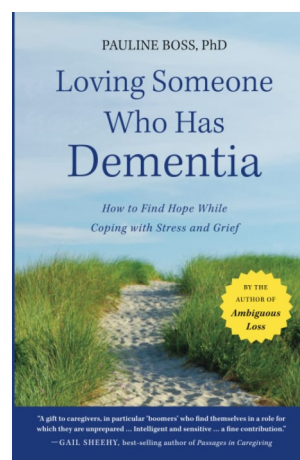
relationships, offering caregivers the perspective they need to be gentler with themselves.

relationships, offering caregivers the perspective they need to be gentler with themselves.

Loving Someone Who Has Dementia: How to Find Hope while Coping with Stress and Grief

By Pauline Boss

Nearly half of U.S. citizens over the age of 85 are



suffering from some kind of dementia and require care. *Loving Someone Who Has Dementia* is a new kind of caregiving book. It's not about the usual techniques, but about how to manage ongoing stress and grief. The book is for caregivers, family members, friends, neighbors as well as educators

and professionals—anyone touched by the epidemic of dementia. Dr. Boss helps caregivers find hope in "ambiguous loss"—having a loved one both here and not here, physically present but psychologically absent.

Boss's book builds on research and clinical experience, yet the material is presented as a conversation. She shows you a way to embrace rather than resist the ambiguity in your relationship with someone who has dementia.



Embracing Autumn as a Caregiver for a Person with Dementia

~Sharon Asher, RN, BSN, MBA, PROGRAM MANAGER

Being a caregiver for someone with dementia can bring many moments filled with strong emotions. As the leaves turn golden and the air becomes crisp, autumn offers a unique opportunity to find solace and beauty amidst the responsibilities of caregiving.

The Challenges of Dementia Caregiving

Caring for a loved one with dementia requires emotional strength and resilience. The progressive nature of the disease means that caregivers must constantly adapt to new behaviors and needs. This can be emotionally draining and sometimes feel like you are constantly losing a part of the person you once knew. The daily tasks of managing medications, ensuring safety, and providing emotional support can feel overwhelming. However, amidst these challenges, there are moments of clarity and connection that remind caregivers of the deep bond they share with their loved one.

Finding Peace in Autumn

Autumn, with its vibrant colors and serene atmosphere, provides a perfect backdrop for caregivers to find these moments of peace and reflection. The changing leaves symbolize the beauty of transformation, reminding caregivers that change, though difficult, can also bring unexpected beauty. Taking a walk through a park, enjoying the crisp air, and listening to the



rustling leaves can be a therapeutic experience. These moments in nature can help caregivers recharge and find a sense of calm amidst the chaos.

Creating Meaningful Moments

Autumn also offers opportunities to create meaningful moments with loved ones. Simple activities like raking leaves together, carving pumpkins, or baking autumn-themed treats can be enjoyable and engaging for someone with dementia. These activities not only provide sensory stimulation but also create cherished memories. Even if the person with dementia may not remember the

activity later, the joy and connection experienced in the moment are invaluable.

Appreciating the Present

One of the most profound lessons that dementia caregivers learn is the importance of appreciating the present moment.

Autumn, with its fleeting beauty, serves as a poignant reminder to savor the here and now. The vibrant colors of the season, the cool breeze, and the warmth of a cozy sweater all encourage caregivers to pause and appreciate the simple pleasures of life. This mindfulness can help caregivers cope with the ongoing responsibilities and find joy in the small victories and moments of connection.

Conclusion

Being a dementia caregiver can be hard, but it is also filled with moments of deep love and connection. Autumn, with its natural beauty and tranquil atmosphere, offers a unique opportunity for caregivers to find peace, create meaningful moments, and appreciate the present. By embracing the season and living in the moment, caregivers can be reminded to find fleeting moments of joy whenever they happen. ❖

HEALTHY RECIPES

Overnight Oats for Healthy Gut, Skin, Heart and Brain

Enjoy this simple healthy overnight oats recipe with oats, chia seeds, nut butter and berries! This easy breakfast is filled with fiber, protein, healthy fats, vitamins, minerals and antioxidants and is the perfect way to start your morning! And it's quick to prepare!



You can easily experiment with milks—using cow's milk, oat milk, almond milk or rice milk. Try adding a tablespoon or two of yogurt for extra calcium and flavor. Try toppings such as shredded coconut, raisins or other chopped dried fruit. Experiment to find the most appealing combinations of ingredients.

Eating overnight oats is believed to be good for gut health, mood, feeling fuller longer, reducing constipation, and promoting heart health!

Enjoy!



Overnight Oats



INGREDIENTS

- 3 cup oats
- 1/3 cup almond milk or water
- 1 Tbsp chia seeds
- 1 tsp honey /agave/maple syrup
- 1/4 tsp vanilla

TOPPINGS

- Slivered almonds, cashews or peanuts
- Almond butter
- Blueberries, strawberries
- Sliced banana
- Shredded coconut or granola

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Before you go to bed: Mix (in a small jar or Tupperware container) oats, chia seeds, almond milk or even plain water, sweetener (agave/maple syrup), vanilla. Make sure that all parts are combined well, stirring or shaking (with the lid on!) around 1 min. Leave covered in the fridge over night or at least for 5 hours.
2. In the morning: Top with berries of your choice, nuts, and nut butter Enjoy hot or cold.

NOTE: If you're using frozen berries and want to eat the overnight oats right away, add them to your oats the night before, so they can thaw. If you're taking them on the go, the frozen berries will keep this breakfast cold for longer, which is nice when its hot outside.

In the Spotlight

How a Chaplain Might be Helpful for People Living with Dementia and Their Caregivers

Wellbeing is a holistic concept that goes beyond just physical health. It includes mental, emotional, spiritual and social dimensions, all of which are interconnected. At PVMCI, we recognize the importance of comprehensive support, especially for those living with dementia and their caregivers. As our program grows and evolves, we see the importance of increasing the scope of what we offer to include help with seeking spiritual support. Our new volunteer, Ryan Lewis is a 2nd year student in Interfaith Ministry at the Chaplaincy Institute of Maine (ChIME). In his role as a PVMCI volunteer, he offers interfaith, nondenominational, nonjudgemental support, as well as a listening ear and a compassionate heart to those needing support around the challenges of living with dementia.

Here's what Ryan says about himself and his prior work experience and education:

As a 2nd Year student at ChIME, I am preparing for vocation as an interfaith spiritual companion, ideally seeking work as a professional chaplain. Typically, you'll find chaplains working in colleges and universities, hospitals, prisons, corporations, and the military, as well as during disasters or



within activist or environmental contexts. Still, one might find a chaplain—one not earning a paycheck—wherever spiritual care may be needed. In these times, that need feels great.

When not volunteering with PVMCI, Northampton Neighbors, or Cooley Dickinson Hospice, I serve as father to a beautiful, wise, and sweet soul of a teen, pick up shiftwork as a writing companion for smarty-pants college students, roleplay as a security guard for a museum village, and drive folks long-distance as a chauffeur. (Currently seeking job opportunities!)

Prior to this most recent transition, I served Mount Holyoke College (MHC) for 7.5 years as its Director of Fellowships. There, my job entailed loads of 1-on-1 advising (for 700+ undergrads!) where I

listened deeply to students, helping them align their strengths and hopes with good-fitting fellowships. I then supported them through to a completed application, including significant writing coaching, copyediting and proofreading, as well as interview support.

A long time ago, I developed, managed, and funded public programs for a humanities-and-arts-based

philanthropic organization in Chicago, facilitated literature-based reflective conversations on justice, civic engagement, and the meaning of service for AmeriCorps, and managed a small grant-writing practice for arts & culture organizations in Metro Detroit.

A very long time ago, I completed graduate work in public history at Loyola University Chicago and, a very, very long time ago, studied history and geography at Humboldt State University (now Cal Poly Humboldt) in Northern California.

If you would like a visit from Ryan, please let your PVMCI memory care specialist know. ❖

FALL ACTIVITY IDEAS

Early and Middle Stage Dementia



Bake a seasonal brain-healthy dish together, using whole foods such as apples, pumpkin or squash. Apple pie is always a treat. See page 8 for a soup recipe to try.

Go on an autumn walk to enjoy the fall leaves and talk about any birds or nature you see, the colors of the leaves changing and the species of trees.



Make some autumn-themed crafts. Many ideas can be found on sites like Pinterest (www.pinterest.com), and materials can be found on S & S Arts and Crafts Supplies (www.ssw.com). Search under “fall crafts” and “senior activities” or take a drive to your local Michaels craft store.

Rake leaves or do some simple fall clean up in the yard or garden. Save or sprinkle seeds for next year’s garden.

Visit an apple orchard or a pumpkin patch and buy some seasonal fruits, gourds, vegetables or fresh cider.



Late Stage Dementia



Cook a fall-themed dish for your loved one and allow them to smell the scent of fall cooking and eat a tasty, brain healthy meal or treat. Apple sauce is fun, easy and delicious.

Collect fall leaves and other nature items and bring them



indoors for your loved one to feel, smell and see. Create a sensory stimulating collection in a basket with leaves, milkweed pods and acorns and other natural objects.

Make a homemade potpourri out of fall seasonings such as cinnamon and cloves, add to a pan of water and cook on low heat with citrus fruit peelings and apples to fill the room with the scent of fall baking.

Go Leaf Peeping on a beautiful crisp day.



Listen to music on the radio and enjoy the sights, engaging in conversation about what you’re seeing and experiencing as you go. Stop at a farm stand for some pumpkins or gourds to bring home. See if your local senior center has any bus trips planned for this purpose and sign up.



Sit on a Park Bench and enjoy the scenery. Pack a thermos of hot tea or cider to enjoy while you’re there.

Limited Mobility Activities

Bird watching. Try putting out some bird feeders in the yard to see a nature show from the comfort of your kitchen window or living room. Notice how the previously bright yellow goldfinches have turned dusky. Cover a pinecone with peanut butter and roll it in birdseed to create a tasty treat for backyard birds (be sure to tie a piece of string to the stem first).



(CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE)

Crocheting, knitting or sewing. Many older adults are comforted by—and are excellent at— these activities. Mending is another option to try.

Organize a fall themed book club. Organizing a book club with a few close friends or relatives is a great way to ensure caregivers and those with dementia, maintain social contact with others.



Socializing is considered a vital brain healthy activity and what better way to get together with others than to be involved in a group discussion about an interesting read.

Make sure that the get-togethers are kept short and that the person with dementia is kept in the loop of the group dialogue.

Listen to music together. Music has been found to help improve cognition and memory and it's one of the top brain-healthy activities you can do with your loved one with dementia. Ask your smart phone or speaker to play: *Early Autumn*, Ella Fitzgerald; *Autumn in New York*, Louis Armstrong & Ella Fitzgerald; *Autumn Leaves*, Roger Williams; *See You In September*, The Happening; *Autumn of My Life*, Bobby Goldsboro; *September Morn*, Neil Diamond; *Wonderful World*, Sam Cooke.

Local Groups for People Experiencing Cognitive Changes

Healing Harmonies Choir



DO YOU LIKE TO SING? We are an informal singing group designed for individuals with diagnosed neurological conditions, particularly those experiencing communication

problems due to voice, language, or speech disorders. Caregivers are also welcome to attend and participate. Some possible conditions may include: - Parkinson's Disease - Progressive Supranuclear Palsy - Stroke - ALS - Traumatic/Acquired Brain Injury - Multiple Sclerosis - Dementia.

WHEN: Wednesdays, 5:30-7:00 Fall 2024 Dates: Weekly September 25 – November 13

WHERE: Sunderland Public Library, 20 School St, Sunderland, MA 01375 **CONTACT:** Please contact Lisa Sommers at 413-545-4010 for more details.

Local Memory Cafes



Amherst: Bangs Community Center

70 Boltwood walk, Amherst. Wednesdays, 10:00am-12:00pm, no reservation required. For more information, contact Julia MacFadzen, (413) 259-3038 or macfadzenj@amherstma.gov

Chicopee: “Memory Connections”

River Mills Center, 5 West Main Street, Chicopee. First Wednesday of each month, 3:00pm-5:00pm, registration required. For more information and to register, call (413) 534-3698

Huntington: “Hilltown Memory Café”

26 Russell Road, Huntington. Wednesdays, 2:00pm-3:00pm. For more information, contact Chrystal Wright, at (413) 685-5283 or caregiveroutreach@huntingtonma.us

Hadley: “Connections Café”

Hadley Council on Aging, 46 Middle Street, Hadley. Wednesdays (call for dates), 1:30pm-3:00pm, walk-ins welcome. For more information, contact Nichelle Liquori at (413) 586-4023 or liquorin@hadleyma.gov

Northampton: “Memorable Moments”

Northampton Council on Aging, 67 Conz Street, Northampton. 4th Tuesday of every month, 1:00pm-2:30pm, registration required. For more information and to register, call (413) 587-1228

Southampton: Southampton Council on Aging 210 College Highway, Suite 3, Southampton. 1st Monday of every month, 10:00am-12:00pm, registration required. For more information and to register, contact Christine Johnson at (413) 529-2105

PIONEER VALLEY MEMORY CARE INITIATIVE

The PVMCI is a coalition of health care and community providers dedicated to empowering and supporting older adults living with dementia and their family caregivers to improve their quality of life. Partnering organizations include Cooley Dickinson Hospital, Cooley Dickinson Medical Group, Cooley Dickinson VNA & Hospice, Valley Medical Group, the Alzheimer's Association, Highland Valley Elder Services, and local Village Networks, senior services, and Councils on Aging. The PVMCI is a member of the Massachusetts General Hospital Memory Care Initiative.

Based out of the Cooley Dickinson Geriatrics program and led by Rebecca Starr, MD, Medical Director, Geriatrician, the PVMCI serves older adults living with memory loss, dementia and Alzheimer's disease and their family caregivers who reside in Amherst, Easthampton and Northampton (including Florence and Leeds). We would be happy to discuss this program and answer any questions that you and/or your loved one may have! Call **413-582-2357** and leave a message with your contact information. A member of the PVMCI team will return your call.

This program is funded by The Eisenberg Family Trust and made possible in part by a grant from Highland Valley Elder Services through funding under the Federal Older Americans Act. To meet our federal requirements, we have been requested to advise you that "there is no fee for the service; however, a voluntary confidential donation is requested. You will not be refused service for lack of a donation. Your donation helps support the continuation of needed services for elders." Interested in donating? Please call the Cooley Dickinson development office at **413-582-2256**. *Thank you!*

MEMORABLE *moments* CAFÉ

Presented by Northampton Senior Center,
Northampton Neighbors, Pioneer Valley Memory Care
Initiative & Highland Valley Elder Services
Funded in part by a grant from the Blue Cross Blue Shield
of Massachusetts Foundation.



ABOUT MEMORY CAFES: Memory Cafes are social get-togethers for people living with memory loss or dementia and their caregivers. The meetings offer a fun activity as well as time for caregivers to share experiences and connect with other caregivers. Caregivers are strongly encouraged to stay for the duration of the meeting.

WHERE: Northampton Senior Center, 67 Conz Street, Northampton MA

WHEN: 4th Tuesday of each month from 1:00-2:30pm. A fun activity, a light snack and a beverage will be offered.

RSVP REQUIRED: Please call the Northampton Senior Center at 413-587-1228 to register. Space is limited so please RSVP early to assure a space!

LUNCH AT THE SENIOR CENTER: Participants can also sign up for lunch at the Senior Center. Separate registration is required. Pre-registration and payment is due 48 hours in advance. You can sign up online at www.myactivecenter.com, call the front desk at 587-1228 or stop by the front desk.