



# The Gathering Place Newsletter

Issue 61

June 2017

Mission Statement::

The Gathering Place at Lakewood UMC is a ministry for those who are living with memory loss and the people who love them.



*“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” – Matthew 25:40*



## Creating a calm and soothing environment

The environment and atmosphere you create while caregiving can play a large part in helping an Alzheimer's patient feel calm and safe.

- **Modify the environment to reduce potential stressors** that can create agitation and disorientation in the Alzheimer's patient. These include loud or unidentifiable noises, shadowy lighting, mirrors or other reflecting surfaces, garish or highly contrasting colors, and patterned wallpaper.

**Maintain calm within yourself.** Getting anxious or upset in response to problem behavior can increase the patient's stress or agitation. Respond to the emotion being communicated by the behavior, not the behavior itself. Try to remain flexible, patient, and relaxed. If you find yourself becoming anxious or losing control, take a time out to cool down.

### Manage stress in an Alzheimer's patient

Different stress-reducing techniques work better for some Alzheimer's patients than others, so you may need to experiment to find the ones that best help your loved one.

- **Exercise is one of the best stress-relievers** for both the Alzheimer's patient and you, the caregiver. Consult with your loved one's physician to make sure it's safe to participate in light exercise. Regular walking, movement, or seated exercises can have a positive effect on many problem behaviors, such as aggression, wandering, and difficulty sleeping. Indoor shopping malls are vast walking opportunities protected from the weather. Or you may even consider singing and dancing.

- **Simple activities can be a way for the patient to reconnect with their earlier life.** Someone who used to enjoy cooking, for example, may still gain pleasure from the simple chore of washing vegetables for dinner. Try to involve the person in as many productive daily activities as possible. Folding laundry, watering plants, or going for a drive in the country can all help to manage stress.

- **Remembering the past** may also help soothe the Alzheimer's patient. Even if your loved one can't remember what happened a few minutes ago, he or she may still clearly recall things from decades ago. Try asking general questions about the person's distant past.

- **Use calming music** or play the person's favorite type of music as a way to relax them when agitated. Music therapy can also help soothe the person during mealtimes and bath times, making the processes easier for both of you.

- **Interacting with other people is still important.** While large groups of strangers may only increase stress levels for an Alzheimer's patient, spending time with different people in one-on-one situations can help to increase physical and social activity.

**Pets can provide a source of positive, nonverbal communication.** The playful interaction and gentle touch from a well-trained, docile animal can help soothe an Alzheimer's patient and decrease aggressive behavior.

## Common Ground Caregiver Conversations

Common Ground is a place and time for caregivers like you to meet, talk, share, learn and receive the support needed to take care of yourselves so you can provide the best care possible to a family member or friend.

Common Ground is a free caregiver assistance program of Interfaith CarePartners® in cooperation with partner congregations in greater Houston. Groups are available for caregivers of persons with dementia and caregivers for persons with other diagnoses and conditions.

Lakewood will be hosting Common Ground on June 12, 2017 from 10:15-11:30 am in the Parlor. For more information, contact Pam Cline at 281.370.2273 or [pam.cline@lakewoodumc.org](mailto:pam.cline@lakewoodumc.org).

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus*  
*(Philippians 4:4-7)*

Lakewood United Methodist Church  
11330 Louetta  
Houston, TX 77070  
281.370.2273

In partnership with  
Interfaith CarePartners®  
713.682.5995