

Remembering and Celebrating Mom

Through the eyes of a PAC Approved Consultant

contributed by Sue Wilson, Deanna Lucekenotte

Families come in all sizes and shapes and so do mothers! Let's celebrate our mothers and remember them at their best. Remembering moms ~ who they are and who they were, is essential to positively connecting with and supporting the changing conditions and abilities of moms living with dementia.

For the next few minutes, let's truly remember our moms and feel their positive presence (whether she is in the next room or the world beyond). This exercise takes just a moment and you may find it useful to do whenever frustrated and at wits end with your own mom or someone else's mom for whom you are care-partnering; a mom who is undergoing the brain changes caused by dementia. Yes, you remember worried looks and raised voices... but let's take time to focus on the positive presence of Mom for a Positive Approach[™] to Care.

Start by visualizing your own mom's face and her smile. You may want to look at photos of her when she was younger and remember her youthful beauty and energy. Think about her soft, warm, loving hugs and kisses, her well wishes, her truly unconditional love for you, her encouragement and reassurance, her joy and pride at your successes and accomplishments (however grand or small). Now, step your experience up a notch and allow yourself to physically feel (from head to toe) an all-embracing hug from your mom. Feel the radiance of her smile. Imagine the touch and the feeling of you giving her a loving hug. Feel the warmth, the connection, and the shared emotions. The sense of connection and assurance can be amazing! The cool thing is, these feelings are mutual. Store these positive feelings in your memory. Breathe in through your nose and fill up with the feelings of love and then smile as you breathe out through your mouth. Close your eyes, breathe in and breathe out, and focus on the positive moments with your mom; repeat a few times. You may feel a sense of calm. Just what you need when you are shocked, upset, exhausted, and not sure what to do in response to a situation that just happened and which makes absolutely no sense to you but makes perfect sense to a mom with dementia.

The important message here is to step back, breathe, and calm down, then respond thoughtfully. The mom with dementia is doing the best she can and so are you! But remember, you are the one with the healthy brain.

So, what makes *situations* happen and how can you thoughtfully respond rather than react in a way that makes a situation worse and upsets everybody, including you? Learning to assess and thoughtfully respond to an individual living with dementia is the focus of the training to become a Certified PAC Consultant. As a PAC Consultant you help families and professional care-partners determine the cause(s) of difficult situations and problem solve on what could be tried next and help them recognize what should probably not be done

next. Positively connecting is the basis of all interactions and taking time to get to know the individual and who they were as well as who they are now is the first step in using a Positive Approach™ with an individual living with dementia ~ most of whom are mothers and grandmothers. Take the needed time to get to know *The Person*.

One of the many tools that Teepa provides her PAC Consultant trainees is the *6 Pieces of the Puzzle*. The 6 pieces sound simple enough and basically they are. But, they provide an elegant framework to guide your assessment of the situation and help you guide the family and professional care partners in developing a solution or set of solutions that are personalized, person-centered, and help to maintain the identity of the individual with dementia. The 6 Pieces include: *The Person* and who they have been; *The Medical Conditions* of the person and their sensory status; *People* including you and others; *The Environment*; and the *Time Awareness* of the person living with dementia. Each piece of the puzzle comes together to help you develop personalized care designed to meet the changing conditions and abilities of an individual living with dementia. It's exciting and rewarding as a PAC Consultant to see the look in a family member's eye or a professional care partner when they *Get It* and they see how they can support the abilities of the individual and reduce the chances of an expression of distress.

Awareness, knowledge, and skills are what you gain as a Certified PAC Consultant.

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