

SONOMA SENIORS TODAY

Stigma of Depression: Self-Advocacy as a Tool

By Nyah Reynolds,
PEARLS Coach, Council
on Aging



Depression is a common human experience that can impact anyone at any age. In 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that 1 in 5 U.S. adults have received a diagnosis of depression. Older people are at an increased risk for experiencing depression due to the many life transitions they face, including declining health, chronic pain, loss of loved ones, income changes, ageism, and increased social isolation. Despite its prevalence, depression symptoms among seniors are often not adequately addressed. Several factors may contribute to this.

One reason depression might be overlooked is that many older adults dismiss depressive symptoms as just a normal part of aging. If they mistake these symptoms for normal aging, they may not mention it to their family, friends, or health providers and thus may not get the appropriate treatment they need and deserve. Clinical depression is not a normal part of aging and is worthy of being addressed and treated. Some physical symptoms of depression that may be attributed to aging include feeling tired, trouble sleeping, appetite changes, poor attention/concentration, and moving more slowly. Depression may also manifest as feelings of sadness, loss of interest, or pleasure in doing things, apathy, isolation, and thoughts of suicide or self-harm. Someone experiencing symptoms of depression should contact their primary care provider, mental health professional, or call the Suicide Crisis Lifeline at 988.

Another reason older adults might overlook depression is the stigma surrounding mental health. They often have misconceptions about treatment options and costs, negative beliefs about treatment effectiveness, and fear of being prescribed medications, or attending therapy. Deep-rooted societal, cultural, and generational factors can add to the stigma. Unfavorable views, attitudes, and perceptions surrounding mental illness contribute to stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination toward people with mental health conditions. Older adults can internalize stigma about having depression symptoms, such as believing that one is "weak," has a character flaw, or might lose their independence if they reach out for help. These concerns can lead to shame, embarrassment,

silence, isolation, and reluctance to seek help. These factors can perpetuate stigma and create barriers to accessing beneficial support and resources. Depression in older adults must be recognized, acknowledged and discussed in order to decrease this stigma.

Fortunately, self-advocacy emerges as a powerful tool for older adults experiencing depression symptoms. Self-advocacy means recognizing and prioritizing one's needs, asserting one's rights and actively seeking support and resources. For older adults dealing with depression, self-advocacy can be incredibly important and transformative. Through self-advocacy, older adults can challenge societal stigma and foster a culture of acceptance and understanding. One example of self-advocacy could be speaking openly about experiences with depression. Sharing personal stories may empower others to talk about their experiences and seek help. Such efforts can alleviate feelings of shame and isolation for those experiencing depression and cultivate a more robust support network of friends, family, and peers who understand and validate their experiences. These connections are crucial in providing encouragement and empathy during difficult times.

Self-advocacy also encourages older adults to prioritize their mental health and take proactive steps toward improving their depression symptoms. There are several ways this can be done, such as introducing physical, pleasant, or social activities into daily routines that help reduce depression, or seeking information and mental health resources such as therapy or support groups. It may also include reaching out to healthcare professionals regarding depression symptoms or concerns about medications. Self-advocacy can help older adults make more informed decisions about their treatment and care. Whether it's choosing to attend therapy, taking or declining medication, or adding a daily walk, older adults can assert their voice and choice in addressing their mental health.

Another avenue of support for older adults experiencing the symptoms of depression is Council on Aging's PEARLS program. PEARLS is a short-term, evidence-based program where clients and coaches work together to identify and work through the challenges contributing to depression symptoms through problem-solving and increasing physical, social, and pleasant activities. The program is free, client-driven, eligibility-based, and voluntary once enrolled. Those interested in PEARLS can find more information at (707) 525-0143 ext. 139.



Photo by Silviarita, Pixabay

PEARLS Testimonial *Living PEARLS*

Over the past couple of years, GP faced some difficult adjustments because of changes in her health that left her with some disability. As a result, she retired from the work she loved and shut down the graphic design business she operated independently for many years. The radical change in her work, identity, and health led to increased feelings of depression and isolation. Last fall, GP connected with the PEARLS program, and after completing her sessions, she was willing to share a testimonial about her life journey, the joy of creativity, and her experience working with the PEARLS program. Changes in GP's identity have been challenging. As she expressed, "Largely, my identity was wrapped up in my business. It was kind of one and the same. When you hired my company, you got me. It's been hard to give that up." GP was able to create her own business from nothing, and she found deep satisfaction in that.

Growing up in the Pacific Northwest, GP couldn't wait to leave home, become an adult, and create her own life. She was happy to make her way to sunny California, where she was able to find her niche in a way that expressed her natural creativity, provided a good livelihood, and brought satisfaction. As she shared, "I'm proud of the fact that I just gradually kept finding my way in the world. My family had no expectations that I would go to college or anything like that. Yet, by working and getting scholarships, I found a way to go to college and get my degree in art. By pursuing what interested me, I was able to find a way to make a living. I had something of value to offer."

"Creativity and creative work have been everything to me. I loved being creative in the ways that I was. My work allowed me to use my

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

INSIDE

The Double Duo Volunteer Team.....	page 3
Puzzles and Games.....	page 4
On the Ice with Vintage Figures.....	page 5
A Shot Above the Others	page 5
Sonoma County Senior Resources.....	page 6
Nutrition News	page 7
Strength in Unity	page 8
Wellness in Sound Story.....	page 8
Accessing Respite Care for Vets.....	page 9
Sepsis—the Silent Killer.....	page 9
Puzzle Solutions.....	page 10
How Aging Affects the Brain.....	page 11

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

gifts and strengths.” Throughout her life, GP has also been able to help people, and now it’s been hard for her to be a person who needs more help. As she said, “I was the one that donated to charities and helped other people solve their problems. I never thought I would be in the position to ask for help. Asking for help is still hard for me.”

GP learned about PEARLS through her connection with COA’s newspaper, Sonoma Seniors Today. Through her graphic design business, she created ads for a longtime client that ran in the SST. She gradually became more familiar with COA and its programs. Then, as she adjusted to the recent changes in her life, she realized she needed to consider support that hadn’t been part of her thinking. When she called about PEARLS, she said she was open to taking a chance on something new.

As an independent person, GP was used to doing her own thing. Throughout her life, she has helped herself and her clients solve problems. Yet, with recent life changes, she realized that she wasn’t doing this for herself in the same way. As she said, “What PEARLS opened up for me was that there was a way to work with someone to help sort through a problem and come up with a plan that was actionable. You helped me use something I knew about, like breaking down problems into doable steps. I could create a checklist that was helpful because, as a creative person, some things can swirl around in my head. That can be great for creative work but not for the kind of organizing and paperwork tasks that I needed to do. PEARLS showed me there was a way to get inside my own head and start to break down what had felt swirling and actually start coming up with things I could do. I liked feeling I had support.” She added, “My coach worked with me from where I was coming from. She had an organized system, and I was able to utilize it to fit my needs.” GP appreciated that, even with the structure of PEARLS, she found that “it wasn’t a cookie-cutter approach.” She said she appreciated her coach’s empathy and the focus on her as a unique person. She added, “I’m not a program or club person. I don’t think anyone has answers for me. No two people are the same. I’m unique, and so are you.”

Leaving her work and a deep sense of belonging in her professional life while also navigating her recent disability left GP with new feelings of isolation. As she said, “I’m not out and about in the way I used to be. I was never lonely. I had always done things on my own.” She said, “Now, being elderly, there is a new way that one can feel isolated and alone.” Letting go of important parts of her identity and connection had been difficult. As she said, “What I could do and deliver for people was all wrapped up in this

neat package. Without that part of me, it’s been a struggle. It’s what got me up in the morning and motivated me. Now there is a big void and I’m learning how to make use of the time that I didn’t have before when I was working.”

Amidst the changes in her life, GP has been open to exploring new activities. As she said, “One thing I’ve started doing is meditating. I’ve been studying up on that and realizing what it is about. To me, meditation is simply a way of clearing out my head and letting things go. When I first became disabled, it was a shock. It wasn’t part of my plans. I realized I needed to de-stress and change my internal dialog. And I’ve found I’m able to do that. I meditate for half an hour every day. I close my eyes, and when I finish, it’s pretty much always about a half hour. I don’t know why. I’ve made it into something that is working for me. I feel a lot less stress. It helps me with my thoughts and feelings. I realize I’m feeling more connected, more of a connection with the world. In a way, it’s opened a whole new world for me.”

The Science of Artful Aging

Presented by Dr. Todd Finnemore



A Lunch & Learn Event

Enhancing well-being from the science of aging and the wisdom of lived personal experience

Dr. Todd Finnemore is a Clinical Geropsychologist who specializes in issues of aging, life transitions, and medical-legal decision-making capacity assessments. Dr. Finnemore supports older adults, their caregivers and families, as well as community health care, social service, and legal professionals in his work.

Thursday, May 23 | 12 - 1 PM
30 Kawana Springs Road, Santa Rosa

Space is limited
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 council on aging



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To enhance the quality of life for our aging community by providing services that promote well-being and maintain independence.

Make SST part of your plan to age successfully!

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lwachter@councilonaging.com

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COA HOLIDAY CLOSINGS

Monday, May 27th
Wednesday, June 19th

Legacy



To leave a bequest is to make a permanent statement of your values. It is by this act of charity that the world will remember what you cared about and what you stood for.

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Pairing Up for Purpose: The Double Duo Volunteer Team

By Michael and Christine Perez
Council on Aging Volunteers

We have been volunteering on Tuesdays at the Sonoma West Community Dining at the Oakridge Apartments since May 2023.

We grew up in the Bay Area—Michael in Pacifica, and Christine spent her youth in San Francisco and Pacifica. We went on our first date after being introduced by a mutual friend in 1986, were married in 1989, and are looking forward to celebrating our 35th Anniversary later this year in October. We have two adult daughters—Jamie (34) and Marlee (26).

We both retired at the end of 2022. Michael worked for the City of Pacifica for almost 35 years, retiring after spending his final 14 years as the Parks, Beaches, and Recreation Director. Christine had been a Court Reporter for nearly 30 years, retiring after spending her last 20 years with the County of San Mateo.

We both like to exercise—biking and hiking—but enjoy walking at least 5 miles together almost daily. Christine loves to cook and bake and has taken full advantage of our proximity to world-class wineries and dining. Michael is a lifelong musician and can be seen regularly playing drums in Sonoma County’s Funk and Soul group, The Soul Section.



Michael and Christine Perez

As former public service employees, we both strongly desire to help others and make a positive impact. After retiring, it was a natural transition to continue contributing our time in service to the community.

As our children grew up, there was no shortage of volunteering opportunities available to us through their preschool, elementary school, and high school. It was important to us to be involved in helping out not just our children but the youth of our community. We were also very involved as coaches and team parents with their soccer and volleyball teams and volunteered and supported the youth group at church. In 2020, we purchased our home in Sonoma to move up here after retirement, and

we want to make sure that we spend some of our newfound free time giving back to our new community.

The City of Pacifica’s Parks, Beaches, and Recreation Department has a comprehensive Senior Services program that includes daily lunch and Meals on Wheels, which, just like Council on Aging, receives a portion of its support from Older American Act funding.

From our experience in Pacifica, we know how important volunteers are to these programs and searched for similar services here in Sonoma. We found Council on Aging website and inquired about volunteering for Meals on Wheels; the opportunity was at the Sonoma West Tuesday Community Dining program, which needed volunteers—less than a mile from our place.

We have enjoyed our time volunteering at the Sonoma West program. Getting to know the participants and serving folks in our community has been such a joy. It has also been extraordinary for the two of us to be able to volunteer together. We encourage anyone interested to contact Council on Aging and find out how you can help make a difference.

Volunteer opportunities
Contact Leigh Galten at 707-525-0143 ext. 121 or check out COA's new Volunteer website at councilonaging.galaxydigital.com.

PUZZLES & GAMES

Puzzle solutions are on page 10

WORD SCRAMBLE
"SUMMER FUN"

1. habce _ _ _ _ _
2. beraeucb _ _ _ _ _ _ _
3. ccpnii _ _ _ _ _
4. nvctaioa _ _ _ _ _ _ _
5. fkswiorre _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
6. iepmarfc _ _ _ _ _ _ _
7. anmdeloe _ _ _ _ _ _ _
8. ratiropd _ _ _ _ _ _ _
9. dvgiin _ _ _ _ _
10. hinfsgi _ _ _ _ _ _ _
11. fflsoplpi _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
12. craceiem _ _ _ _ _ _ _

SUDOKU - Medium

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SUDOKU - Hard

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WORD SEARCH

"JAZZ SINGERS OF NOTE"

- BESSIE SMITH PEGGY LEE
- BILLY HOLIDAY FRANK SINATRA
- SARAH VAUGHAN LOUIS ARMSTRONG
- JULIE LONDON JOE WILLIAMS
- NINA SIMONE ELLA FITZGERALD
- NAT KING COLE MEL TORME

"MEMORIAL DAY"

ACROSS

- 1 Fifth month of the
Gregorian calendar year
- 4 Left over
- 9 Leaving
- 14 Expression of surprise
- 15 Freedom from war or
hostility
- 16 Shelter under branches
- 17 Prisoner of war
- 18 Constellation
- 19 River
- 20 In __ (together)
- 22 Gives a grant
- 24 Morning moisture
- 25 Darken
- 27 Sky
- 29 Gasoline
- 32 Snappish
- 35 Craze
- 36 Observe secretly
- 38 Unhappiness
- 40 Tinted
- 42 Sing
- 44 Harness
- 45 Report
- 47 Letter part
- 49 Fasten
- 50 Public procession of people
- 52 Ends
- 54 Yang's partner
- 55 Self-esteem
- 56 Whiz
- 59 Enlistee person who
serves in the Navy
- 63 Decorative needle case
- 67 __ Gras
- 69 Having to do with the navy
- 71 Business abbr.
- 72 Constellation
- 73 Inscribed pillar
- 74 Tell a tall tale
- 75 Gushes out
- 76 Taut
- 77 Limited (abbr.)

WORD SEARCH - "JAZZ SINGERS OF NOTE"

S	T	J	L	V	H	N	C	N	H	M	I	C	U	O	M
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P	C	C	A	F	G	L	X	Q	R	S	M	E	R	W	O
Q	T	A	X	A	R	A	A	R	S	X	I	Q	A	M	R
B	I	L	L	Y	H	O	L	I	D	A	Y	M	D	N	M
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X	U	E	L	L	A	F	I	T	Z	G	E	R	A	L	D
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72						73						74		
75						76						77		

By Jimmy and Evelyn Johnson - www.qets.com

DOWN

- 1 Charts
- 2 Sailors "hey"
- 3 Gape
- 4 Resort hotel
- 5 Rites performed in
order to give honor
- 6 Precipitation
- 7 Did well
- 8 Mexican money
- 9 Refueling, with "up"
- 10 Unrefined metal
- 11 As previously cited
- 12 Not any
- 13 Nourished
- 21 Central daylight time
- 23 Armed fighting
between nations
- 26 Tax agency
- 28 Depend
- 29 Remit (2 wds.)
- 30 Water retention
- 31 Baggy
- 32 Musical production
- 33 Bird perch
- 34 Harnesses
- 35 Former president of
U.S.
- 37 Poem
- 39 Kitten's cry
- 41 Rowboat
- 43 Left wing members
- 46 Dried grapes
- 48 Mist
- 51 Deoxyribonucleic acid
(abbr.)
- 53 Seafood
- 56 Famous cookies
- 57 Cavil
- 58 Canal
- 60 Institution (abbr.)
- 61 Opp. of early
- 62 Kiln
- 64 Dig up the soil
- 65 Part
- 66 Chilled
- 68 __ Jones Industrial
average
- 70 Downwind

On the Ice with the Vintage Figures

by Coby LaFayette, Senior Wine Country Games Coordinator

Peggy Fleming. Dorothy Hamill. Kristi Yamaguchi. Tara Lipinski. Sara Hughes. If you are familiar with the world of women’s ice skating, these names should ring a bell. These women are US figure skating champions and Olympic Gold Medalists. Many aspiring young skaters grew up idolizing these women and modeling their skating careers after them.

You might not know that we have our own Gold Medalists right here in Sonoma County. They call themselves the Vintage Figures, an adult synchronized skating group of 50+-year-old women with an impressive collective resume of competition and performance that spans decades. You only need to watch them in practice to see why they came home with the gold at their very first competition.

These women are in love with performing, and it shows. What also shows is the caliber of their performance: the choreography. The Vintage Figures’ superpower is their coach, Karen Kresge.



The Vintage Figures at a recent practice

Karen is an ice-skating superstar. She skated as the lead performer with Shipstads & Johnson’s Ice Follies for over a decade. Those Olympians mentioned above? Karen has skated with several of them and choreographed programs for one of the others. Locally, Karen was behind every holiday ice show at Snoopy’s Home Ice. So, it should come as no surprise that the combination of her leadership and the deep talent of the

Vintage Figures, some of whom she’s coached over the years, is a winning collaboration. These women practice on and off the ice at Snoopy’s Home Ice every Monday evening. You’ll hear them before you see them, whether on the rink or upstairs in the ballet room, and you’ll know them by the laughter and happy chatter of good friends having too much fun.

A Shot Above the Others

by Coby LaFayette, Senior Wine Country Games Coordinator

Paul Troppy is one of those guys you could call the “salt of the earth.” He’s always got too much going on and frequently finds himself spread thin. That’s because he has this great big heart and genuinely likes helping people.

But, be clear: this is a man on a mission. That mission is to become the sports commissioner for California’s biggest, best, and most popular Throws Pentathlon for athletes over 50. So, you can see why he’s our guy. Paul, himself a member of the over-50 set, is all about access to places to be an active and engaged older adult.

Paul’s been with the Games since 2016 when, post knee replacement surgery, he set his sights on our shot put and discus competitions. He took second in both and became the lead official for the next four years. At that point, he was “recruited” to the position of sports commissioner for our throwing events, a position he holds today.

Right around this time, Paul decided to do two things that would positively impact him and our Games. The first was to become officially “official” by completing his certification as a United States of America Track & Field (USATF) official. Of this decision, he says: “It gave me more teeth. I moved up from ‘dweeb’ to an associate,” he grinned. And not one to sit comfortably on his laurels, Paul is now actively working on becoming a national official in his spare time.

The second thing Paul did for our throw competition was to change the venue. Located initially at Healdsburg High School, he suggested we move to Santa Rosa High School (SRHS), where he was head coach for the school’s throwers. And where he likes to joke, there were “bathrooms.”

The convenience of the location—literally off the 101—and the bathrooms weren’t the only pluses of SRHS’s venue. At SRHS, Paul had been quietly creating his very own “Field of Dreams” at what is currently called Nevers Field. At that time, there were only two rings: one discus and



Commissioner Paul Troppy (left) and Ed Davis, Throws Champion

one shot put ring. On his watch, Paul has almost singlehandedly facilitated the installation and maintenance of two additional shot put and discus rings. And he’s not done yet. His goal, when he retires from coaching at SRHS in 9 years (or so), is to leave behind a field to some new coach “who will only have to maintain it, enjoy it, and coach the kids.” Oh, and serve as our sports commissioner, should Paul decide to retire from that, too.

In the meantime, Paul’s throwing mecca has become the centerpiece of our annual Throws Pentathlon. It’s a competition that local throwing clubs like Empire Throwers and the Chileno Valley Throwers look forward to competing in each year. And let’s be clear: some serious competitors exist in these clubs, like Ed Davis. In 2022 and 2023, Ed held the world record for the furthest throw in his 70+ class.

Don’t let Ed’s stature intimidate you from taking up the sport. The great thing about throws, according to Paul, is that they are incredibly accommodating and forgiving of injuries or physical limitations, which, as we all know, tend to come with aging. “Everyone has to enter and exit the ring the same,” Paul said, “other than that, you can throw any way you want.” There’s that, and as you age, the implements (what you throw) get lighter!

Paul freely admits that it’s the camaraderie, the food, and the fun that fires him up and keeps him engaged.

It’s also the community, a community that follows you from tournament to tournament. It’s a feeling he’d like to see everyone get to experience. “I’ve done many things in my life,” he shared, “but the heart and soul has always been throwing. It is what I love. To those who don’t know about it, come and check it out. You don’t need any equipment; we’ll loan it to you. And it’s a great way to be active.”

What’s a Throws Pentathlon? A throws pentathlon includes the following five events: Discus, Hammer, Javelin, Shot put, and Weight throw.

Want to Advertise?

Council on Aging’s bi-monthly newspaper, *Sonoma Seniors Today*, reaches over 8,500 Sonoma County residents and is available at over 160 locations throughout the County, including restaurants, hospitals, senior centers, book stores and libraries.

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NUTRITION NEWS

Eating Right
with Less Sugars



Sugar is found naturally in some foods and beverages like fruit and milk, however, it is also added to many foods. Sugars added to foods and beverages give them a sweet taste but offer no nutrition compared to foods and drinks that are naturally sweet. Foods containing natural sources of sugar provide nutrients such as vitamins and minerals.

Many people think dessert is the main source of added sugars, however, many commonly consumed foods and drinks contain sugars. Snack foods such as crackers and ready-to-eat foods such as pasta sauce and pizza can contain added sugars. Limit added sugars to less than 10 percent of the total calories consumed per day. If you have a taste for something sweet, try unsweetened fruit. Often the sweetness of the fruit will satisfy your desire for a sweet treat. Try making or buying healthier versions of baked goods, purchasing food and drinks with added sugar less often, and eating and drinking sweet treats in smaller portions.

Identifying Added Sugars:

The Nutrition Fact Label can help you identify sources of added sugars. You can also review the ingredient list to see what types of added sugars are in the food. Look for food and beverages that don't have sugar or some other form of sweetener listed as the first ingredient. Examples of sweeteners and added sugars include sugar, brown sugar, dextrose, corn syrup, fructose, high-fructose corn syrup, maple syrup, honey, molasses, and sucrose.

Tips: How to Reduce Added Sugars

- Sweetened low-fat plain yogurt with fresh, frozen, or unsweetened canned fruit instead of eating fruit-flavored yogurt.
- Drink healthier drinks such as plain milk and water.
- Drink plain low-fat milk instead of chocolate-flavored milk.
- Replace punch or fruit-flavored drinks with 100% fruit juice.
- Add cinnamon and dried unsweetened fruit to plain cooked oatmeal or cold cereal instead of eating flavored oatmeal or sugary cereals.
- Use jams and jellies made with no added sugars.
- Drink plain water or plain low-fat milk instead of sweetened beverages such as sodas, sports drinks, or energy drinks.
- Make a fresh smoothie with frozen unsweetened fruit, plain no sugar added yogurt, and low-fat milk in place of ice cream.

Prepared for you by Michael Helwig, RD Council on Aging
Source: National Institute of Health | Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, USDA



CA

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Strength in Unity: Harnessing Family, Professionals, and Self-Advocacy for Health and Wellness

By Teresa Petuya,
Sonoma State
University Intern



Have you ever left the doctor’s office only to think, “We didn’t discuss what I was most concerned about?” The stress of today’s rapid-fire medical appointments can transform your long-awaited discussion into a blur. Sometimes, the jargon is inaccessible, or the provider can inadvertently steer the appointment away from your concerns. If this sounds familiar, you’re not alone. Many people feel confused or unheard in their conversations with doctors. It is difficult to determine if your care is adequate and represents all available options. Through preparation and advocacy, you can maximize the time you spend with your doctor and ensure that your health needs are managed to your satisfaction.

Making a list of pertinent health concerns and questions can help you make the most of your appointment. Create a framework to strengthen your memory while you are with your provider that you can refer to throughout your appointment. Start by writing out your concerns a few days ahead, then prioritize them from most to least important. Include short bullet points about symptoms or other details. Bring a complete list of medications you take, even if your doctor uses electronic medical records; this can help to identify discrepancies. As you and your doctor work through your appointment, take notes and repeat new information to ensure you understand. Also, ask your doctor if you can record the appointment if taking notes in real-time is distracting or difficult.

Ensure you can see and hear as best as possible for your appointment. If you use hearing aids or glasses, bring these to your appointment for better comprehension. Eat a healthy, light meal and hydrate so you are focused. Get to the appointment with time to

spare so that you do not feel anxious or rushed, and schedule later activities with a generous cushion of time in case your appointment runs late.

Friends or family members can be valuable advocates at your doctors’ appointments. You might ask them to accompany you to take notes, clarify new information, and help you feel more comfortable and focused. Discuss the appointment with your companion ahead of time and make sure that they understand their role. They should not take over the appointment but instead, listen carefully and only offer opinions or details when necessary. Bringing a companion along is especially helpful when receiving a distressing diagnosis. KH, a 60-year-old Cotati resident, said, “You just can’t process things by yourself. When I received my cancer diagnosis, my husband was immediately on the computer. He was taking notes, asking questions, and pulling up research studies. I was just in shock. Once I heard the word cancer, it was like my whole body went into panic mode. My brain shut down. I needed him there.”

Patient advocacy services can provide you with professional help in navigating the complex healthcare system. Advocates can help you organize your goals, make lists, come to appointments with you, and provide more in-depth management if you have a severe illness. Appointments, treatments, and medications can be overwhelming—even for healthcare professionals; advocates can steer you to ask the right questions and make the best care decisions for yourself. Some insurance companies provide patient advocacy services, but you must generally seek this by calling your insurance provider. Hospitals employ patient advocates who can help you ensure that you are getting optimal care. You can also visit <https://www.patientadvocate.org> to see if you are eligible to receive free, volunteer-led advocacy services.

Finally, independently contracted patient advocates can be found at this website: <https://app.umbrahealthadvocacy.com/search>. These professionals offer paid services, though many will give you a free consultation.

Understanding your medications is vital to understanding your health, but can quickly become unmanageable and confusing. The best practice is to keep an updated list, which you periodically review, even if you have not changed medications recently. Include the medication name, the dosage, the schedule, and why you take each medication. Over-the-counter drugs and supplements are essential to include as well. Remember to discuss these with your provider before adding them to your regimen. This helps identify risk factors in an emergency, keeps your medication schedule on track, and provides an easily accessed record. Many people keep this information in their wallets.

Self-advocacy is important when we are unable to speak for ourselves. Creating a framework for our care through advanced directives when we are healthy is vital to ensure that our wishes are carried out in the event of incapacitation. Living wills allow us to decide which invasive, life-sustaining medical treatments we would like to receive. Durable Power of Attorney forms are used to select a healthcare proxy, or someone whom we trust to execute our wishes if we are unable to speak for ourselves. Medicare Part B covers provider appointments to understand and plan these important legal documents. Remember that you have no obligation to sign or continue to hold an advance directive. These forms are designed to give you the peace of mind that your wishes will be supported, so do not feel pressured by any time schedule or outside influence.

The medical system can be challenging to navigate, even for physicians. Good communication and utilizing your support system will make a substantial difference in your medical care when need to take these measures. For your next significant appointment, get prepared and bring someone you trust. You are the focus of your health care. Take a seat at the table and pull out another chair.

Wellness in Sound Story

by Shirryl Bayless, Paradigm Shift

We each held a vague notion that sound vibrations carry a special power. When Amelia and Bob of Sound Bath graciously visited us at one of our Day Respite sites in March, that truth was as clear as a bell.

A mallet is circled along the rim of one of the unique bowls. “Where in your body do you feel this sound?” Amelia asks. A higher pitch lands poignantly on the first, “How about this one?” As the tone lengthens, a single gentle drum beat adds another dimension, paced as Bob walks the perimeter. We learned the extent to which we *feel* sounds.

The nature and purpose of sound were discussed—a bell in the schoolyard interrupts. Clapping culminates in appreciation. Musical rhythm elicits movement. As much as sound informs, it can also serve as a profound pathway. Memories, emotions and sensations long buried or forgotten can also be accessed through sound. The creation and properties of each bowl were highlighted. A bowl may include infused minerals, distinctive provincial gemstones or

quartz. Each has a unique frequency, and each person receives its sound differently.

Amelia and Bob introduced samples of sounds into the room using the bowls and other instruments. A “Rain Stick” brought soothing ocean waves and rain. Sounds of the Kalimba resembling those of a music box, wind chimes and Tibetan/Nepalese bells were played.

A sound meditation experience starts best as if clearing a computer hard drive or rearranging a room, emphasizing the benefits of starting fresh. We were encouraged to invoke something we wanted to come into that void. Perhaps it would be: Joy, Reminiscing, A Wish or Healing.

The group was encouraged to associate these sounds with personal experiences and feelings.

The sounds we make ourselves are a powerful resource as well. A sigh, for example, is a tool we know well for relief.

Amelia demonstrated how humming differently while opening or closing your mouth is a great vibrational exercise. “Ahhhhhhhhhh.



Amelia Bell and Bob Rudorf

MmmmmmmMMMmm.”

Sound meditations have been shown to have long-term positive effects on the body, promoting circulation, reducing stress and relieving discomfort. Many report improved sleep quality, reduced anxiety and enhanced overall well-being due to incorporating sound meditation into their daily routine. *

We thanked Sound Bath for the wellspring and tuning us in. Major applause ensued.

For more information on Paradigm Shift, call 707-799-9605

**Studies show sound meditation offers potential health improvement, including reduction of stress and improved wellness. Further scientific studies are required to assert the health benefits fully.*

Caregiver Corner: Accessing Respite Care for Veterans

Co-authors: Kelly Miller, Executive Vice President of Business Development and Jamie Escoubas, Director of Social and Fiduciary Services, Council on Aging

As we commemorate Memorial Day, it's crucial to highlight some of the benefits available to Veterans, especially those who may need to be made aware of their eligibility for supportive services. Many Veterans facing physical or cognitive challenges while living at home have the opportunity to access assistance through various programs. The following benefits aim to support Veterans and their caregivers in maintaining independence, health, and well-being as they age or manage disabilities.

Here are some of the benefits Veterans and their loved ones may receive:

- **Non-medical Homecare:** The VA provides homecare services for Veterans who need assistance with activities of daily living, such as bathing, dressing, meal preparation, medication reminders, light housekeeping, and companionship. These services can be provided in the Veteran's home, allowing them to remain in a familiar and comfortable environment. Several local companies, such as J&M Homecare Services, have contracted with the VA to provide these services specifically to Veterans. With 23 years of experience, J&M

Homecare Services extends care throughout Sonoma County, providing non-medical care to Veterans and their family caregivers.

- **Adult Day Respite Program:** A Day Respite Program can be an excellent option for those preferring respite care outside the home environment or in tandem with homecare support. This VA-contracted service is designed to support older adults living with dementia or other functional impairments by providing a safe, nurturing setting for participants to engage in social, cognitive, and physical activities, affording caregivers the opportunity for essential respite. One local option for this type of service can be accessed through Council on Aging's Alzheimer's Day Respite Program in Santa Rosa.
- **Caregiver Support:** The VA also provides support services for family caregivers of Veterans, including education, training, counseling, and financial assistance programs. These services aim to help caregivers manage the challenges of caring for a loved one at home and ensure that Veterans receive the highest quality of care possible.

Overall, these benefits for in-home care, adult day programs, and caregiver support can significantly improve the quality of life for veterans and their caregivers by allowing them

to remain in their homes and communities while receiving the care and attention they need. There are three primary avenues through which Veterans can access these benefits:

- Veteran's Administration's Community Care Network
- VA Aid and Attendance Benefits
- Veteran's Pension

To explore eligibility for these benefits, contact your Sonoma County Veteran's Service Office at (707) 565-5960 or via email at vso@schsd.org. Their office, situated at 3725 Westwind Blvd, 1st Floor, in Santa Rosa, is equipped to guide you through the process, facilitating evaluations and referrals. Additional information is available on their website: [Sonoma County Veterans Services](<https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/health-and-human-services/human-services/veterans>).

To all our esteemed Veterans who have served our nation, let us reciprocate your service by extending care and support through home care or day respite programs.

For inquiries about J&M Homecare Services mentioned above, contact their local office at (415) 499-1200 or visit their website at www.jmhomecare.com.

For inquiries about Council on Aging's Alzheimer's Day Respite Program, call (707) 525-0143 ext.103 or visit the website at www.councilonaging.com.

Sepsis—The Silent Killer

By Samantha de Roque, BSN, RN, PHN, and local Emergency Department Nurse



Sepsis, commonly known as “blood poisoning,” is a significant cause of death among the elderly, killing more Americans per year than breast cancer, prostate cancer, and HIV/AIDs combined, and is the most common cause of death among hospitalized patients. Yet many have never heard of this potentially lethal condition.

Sepsis is the body’s overwhelming immune response to an infection that has spread to the bloodstream. Sepsis can develop due to pneumonia caused by COVID-19, the flu, another respiratory infection, a urinary tract infection, or even something as simple as a cut or wound. Immune chemicals are sent throughout the blood, triggering inflammation and leading to blood clots and leaky blood vessels. Eventually, if left untreated, this immune response can affect the body’s vital organs, leading to organ damage and failure.

For older individuals, the effects of sepsis can be particularly deadly. According to the Sepsis Alliance, people aged 65 and older are thirteen times more likely to be hospitalized than those under 65. Sixty-three percent of older adults admitted to the ICU are already suffering from sepsis, and 40 percent of older adults will have a readmission to the hospital within three months (primarily due to another episode of sepsis). The final stages of sepsis, including severe sepsis and septic shock, have an approximately 50–60 percent mortality rate for those over 85. If an individual survives sepsis,

their quality of life will likely be impacted. Many elderly adults are left with disabilities, and sepsis is linked to moderate-to-severe cognitive impairment, as well as depression and anxiety after hospitalization.

Why does sepsis so heavily impact older adults? As we age, so too does our immune system. Not only is our immune response decreased, but common signs and symptoms of sepsis, as seen in children and younger adults, may go unnoticed, and sepsis may also present differently. The cough response is often suppressed in older adults, as is sputum production, so the first symptoms of pneumonia may be a fall or confusion or, later on, rapid breathing, which may require hospitalization and supplemental oxygen. The signs of a urinary tract infection (UTI), such as painful urination, may not be present in older adults or may be confused for prostate issues in men or pelvic organ prolapse in women. Additionally, UTIs may confuse or cause an altered mental state rather than a fever and painful urination. Older adults tend to live with a lower basal body temperature, so fever may not always be present.

So, what can we do to help protect ourselves from this deadly killer? The key to preventing sepsis is to prevent infections from occurring in the first place. Regular handwashing is vital to keeping ourselves healthy and maintaining all wounds clean. An infection can often result from a minor scrape or cut left untreated. If you notice a wound, washing it immediately and keeping it clean and dry is essential. You must seek urgent medical care if you notice any redness, heat, swelling, foul-smelling discharge, or fever. This is especially important for people with diabetes, who are already at risk for poor wound healing and may suffer from nerve damage that prevents them from noticing that a wound is getting worse.

Good oral hygiene, including regular brushing and flossing, also helps to prevent oral infections and pneumonia. If you smoke, it’s important to quit, as smoking can increase susceptibility to many different infections. Tobacco smoke can also impair functions of the immune system, leading to decreased ability to fight infections and an increased recovery time from illness. Those with chronic lung diseases, such as COPD, are at an elevated risk for developing sepsis and need to remain vigilant and seek treatment early. Other individuals at exceptionally high risk include anyone with a chronic health condition, such as diabetes, cancer, liver or kidney disease, or those with otherwise compromised immune systems.

Drinking plenty of water (at least eight glasses per day), emptying your bladder when you need to go, rather than holding it, wearing cotton underwear, and practicing good hygiene are all keys to preventing UTIs. Women should always wipe from front to back when using the bathroom, and avoid cleaning the inside of the vagina with soaps or douches (or anything other than water).

It is essential to watch out for signs of infection in yourself, your friends, and family members. Since the first sign of sepsis might be an altered mental state, the person suffering may not be aware that something is wrong. Other common warning signs for sepsis, combined with a suspected infection, include a high heart rate, rapid breathing, fever (temperature greater than 100.4°F, or a low temperature of 96.8°F or less), chills, difficulty breathing, pale, clammy skin, or sweating. Low blood pressure can also be a late sign of sepsis. Sepsis is a medical emergency, and if you think you might be suffering from sepsis or notice that an infection is not improving, go to your nearest Emergency Department.

The Creative Collage Lunch

By Debbie VanDyke, Council on Aging Congregate Coordinator

We had a great turn out for the first-ever Creative Collage with Lunch event in February! Artist Debbie Van Dyke presented the class. Valuable assistance was provided by our rock-n-roll volunteers Malissa, Anne, and Tino from Keysight, and our staff member Noel.

Council on Aging provided a nutritious and delicious lunch, which was partially funded by the Older Americans Act. After lunch, our 16 artists cut to the chase, literally. Each student had a stack of magazines, and the idea was to cut out what inspires you, without thinking about it too much.

Collage is the art of cutting and pasting, using anything. Fabric, paper, metal, feathers, jewelry—it all works. This class used magazines, and a bit of glitter glue for bling, to create several small masterpieces.

Did you know that Picasso was one of the first artists to create art using collage? Picasso and Georges Braque were the founding fathers of the technique, which emerged from the avant-garde art movement early in the 20th century.

Collage is a great way to relieve stress, create vision boards, and have fun. Channel your inner child and give it a go. All you need is paper, glue, and scissors.



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Crossword

1	M	A	Y		4	S	C	R	A	P		9	G	O	I	N	G		
14	A	H	A		15	P	E	A	C	E		16	A	R	B	O	R		
17	P	O	W		18	A	R	I	E	S		19	S	E	I	N	E		
20	S	Y	N	21	C		22	E	N	D	O	W	S		24	D	E	W	
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40	D	Y	E	41	D		42	Y	O	D	E	43	L		44	Y	O	K	E
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67	M	A	R	D	I		69	N	A	V	A	L		71	I	N	C		
72	O	R	I	O	N		73	S	T	E	L	E		74	L	I	E		
75	S	P	E	W	S		76	T	E	N	S	E		77	L	T	D		

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

Word Search

S	T	J	L	V	H	(N)	C	N	H	M	I	C	U	O	(M)
K	Y	G	K	R	Y	V	I	G	H	O	M	Y	S	Z	E
A	A	Z	B	I	T	N	Y	N	K	N	V	Q	H	D	L
C	Z	Y	K	D	B	C	W	P	A	M	T	F	V	W	T
P	C	C	A	F	G	L	X	Q	R	S	M	E	R	W	O
Q	T	A	X	A	R	A	A	R	S	X	I	Q	A	M	R
(B)	I	L	L	Y	H	O	L	I	D	A	Y	M	D	N	M
C	G	(J)	U	L	I	E	L	O	N	D	O	N	O	K	E
N	(B)	E	S	S	I	E	S	M	I	T	H	J	D	N	N
R	(L)	O	U	I	S	A	R	M	S	T	R	O	N	G	E
E	C	X	D	H	G	(P)	E	G	G	Y	L	E	E	D	B
(N)	A	T	K	I	N	G	C	O	L	E	Y	F	B	Y	K
X	U	(E)	L	L	A	F	I	T	Z	G	E	R	A	L	D
S	(S)	A	R	A	H	V	A	U	G	H	A	N	H	A	P
D	(F)	R	A	N	K	S	I	N	A	T	R	A	C	Q	A
B	J	B	E	D	(J)	O	E	W	I	L	L	I	A	M	S

WORD SCRAMBLE - Summer Fun!

1. habce	B E A C H
2. beraeucb	B A R B E C U E
3. ccpnii	P I C N I C
4. nvctaioa	V A C A T I O N
5. fkswiorre	F I R E W O R K S
6. iepmarfc	C A M P F I R E
7. anmdeloe	L E M O N A D E
8. ratiropd	R O A D T R I P
9. dvgiin	D I V I N G
10. hinfsgi	F I S H I N G
11. fflsoplpi	F L I P F L O P S
12. craceiem	I C E C R E A M

SUDOKU - Medium

3	5	7	4	9	8	1	2	6
6	8	1	5	3	2	4	9	7
4	2	9	6	1	7	5	8	3
7	1	3	8	2	5	6	4	9
2	9	6	1	4	3	8	7	5
5	4	8	7	6	9	2	3	1
8	3	5	2	7	1	9	6	4
1	7	4	9	8	6	3	5	2
9	6	2	3	5	4	7	1	8

SUDOKU - Hard

7	2	8	5	1	9	3	6	4
5	9	4	6	3	8	7	2	1
3	1	6	7	4	2	9	5	8
4	8	3	2	5	1	6	9	7
2	7	9	8	6	3	4	1	5
1	6	5	4	9	7	8	3	2
9	4	7	3	2	5	1	8	6
8	5	1	9	7	6	2	4	3
6	3	2	1	8	4	5	7	9

How Aging Affects the Brain

By Sara Stoxen, RN

Aging can affect cognition, mood, and the anatomy of the brain and can change the course of one’s life significantly.

Understanding how brain changes happen and which measures can prevent these long-lasting potential outcomes can help empower people to maintain a desired level of functioning.



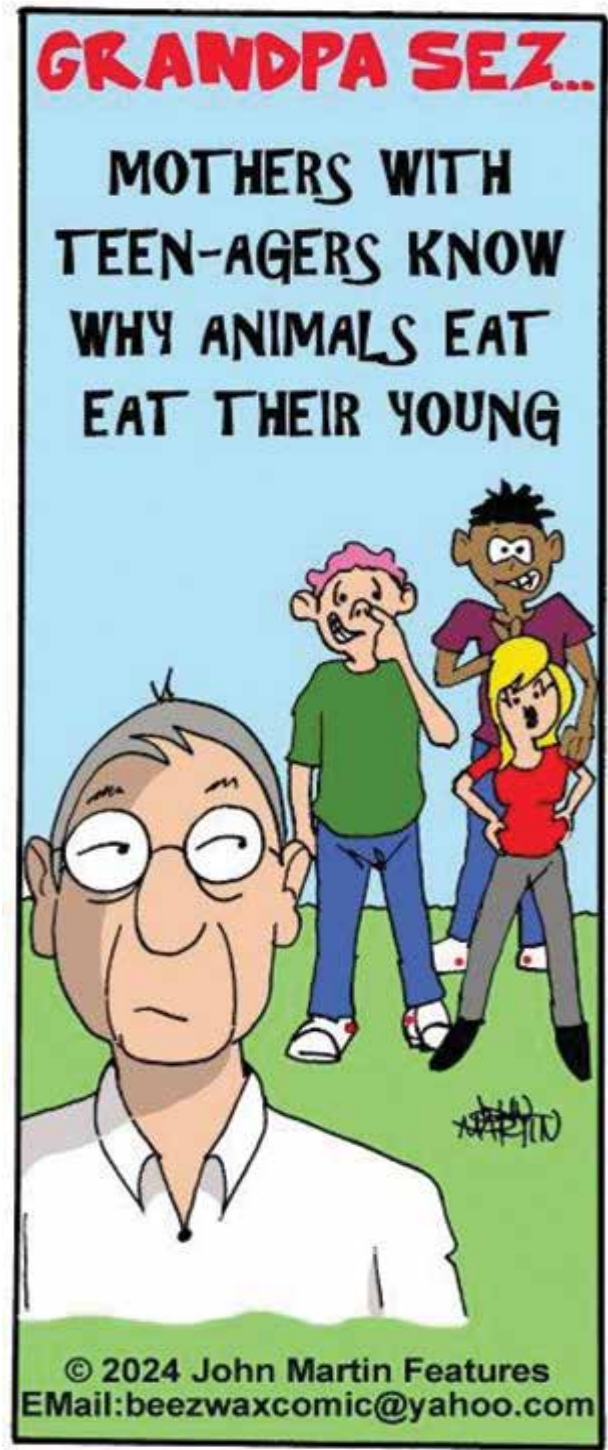
There are two essential concepts to understand when learning and beginning to understand the aging brain: structural changes and cognitive shifts that may occur. Some neurons make up brain tissue. These neurons connect to allow impulses to travel through the different parts of the brain that have varying functions. These structures can start to break down and waste away, which leads to decreased overall brain volume. This breakdown can be focal—only impacting one specific area of the brain—or generalized—dispersed in its impact. This anatomical change causes blood flow to diminish throughout the brain because the overall size of the brain has decreased, and the size of the vessels that supply blood to the brain also shrinks.

Another result of the aging brain is how one thinks and remembers. Cognitively, this change can result in a more difficult time recalling information, either recently or in long-term memory. Signs and symptoms of an aging brain include aphasia (language loss), seizures and dementia symptoms such as confusion, hallucinations, mood changes, or a decline in language usage from frontotemporal alterations. Causes of cognitive changes like these can be due to dementia, traumatic brain injury, substance use, other pre-existing neurological disorders, or disorders that affect the vasculature, such as diabetes or hypertension.

If one is curious about whether cognitive changes are developing, they can see a neurologist for a full workup and assessment. This will likely result in an order for a CT scan or MRI of the brain to visualize if there have been structural changes to the brain. Ways in which an aging brain is treated include physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy, psychological therapy and support, and medication options that may slow down the rate of change in the brain.

Other important preventative measures include managing stress levels, increasing one’s quality of life and sleep, getting regular daily exercise, and ensuring a consistent nutrient-rich diet with a lot of fluids.

In sum, cognitive health—how one thinks, learns, and remembers—can be safeguarded! One can decrease the rate of the aging brain by implementing small habits now to ensure a full, expressive life for as long as possible!



MOVIES TO CELEBRATE

By Barbara Spear

NINOTCHKA (1939) is a truly delightful comedy from a director who helped to define the genre, Ernst Lubitsch. It stars Greta Garbo and Melvyn Douglas. Garbo, of course, was noted for her tragic roles of unrequited love, so much so that the film was promoted with the tagline that proclaimed “Garbo laughs!”



The witty script was written by Billy Wilder (before he started directing pictures) and his partner Charles Brackett. In **NINOTCHKA** Garbo plays a strict Soviet comrade who is sent to Paris to check up on three incompetent emissaries who are supposed to be selling jewels to buy machinery for the Russian cause. She turns up her nose at French fashions and is shocked by the decadence of the West until she comes under the spell of the suave aristocratic playboy Douglas. Garbo throws herself wholeheartedly into the role, and watching her step down from her pedestal is one of the highlights of the film. John J. Pucchio of “Movie Metropolis” says, “...thanks to Garbo, its supporting cast, and director Ernst Lubitsch’s magic touch, it remains one of Hollywood’s most sparkling products.” And Jeffrey M. Anderson of “Combustible Celluloid” calls the film, “A highly enjoyable comedy— one of the greatest ever made.” **NINOTCHKA** has a terrific score of 95% on the Rotten Tomatoes website and can be streamed from Amazon Prime for \$3.99.

Barbara Spear organizes and moderates two film groups: Lifelong Friends of Film, meeting on the last Friday of the month at the Rialto Cinemas Sebastopol to watch a contemporary movie and discuss it in the theater; and the OLLI Cinema Club, which meets periodically at the Rohnert Park-Cotati Library. For more information or to be added to the email lists, contact her at shadowvoyager7@gmail.com.

Meals on Wheels Testimonial—PT

A native of San Francisco, California, PT began her life amidst the famous fog of the city. However, her mother’s aversion to the mist prompted a move to San Rafael when PT was just four years old, shaping the backdrop of her childhood. Growing up, PT shared her journey with two brothers and two sisters, forming a close-knit family.

As she navigated through college, PT’s trajectory took a significant turn when she secured a pivotal internship with the City of San Rafael. This opportunity opened doors, leading to another internship with the University of California, Davis, ultimately laying the foundation for her successful career as a Human Resources Manager.

Beyond her professional achievements, PT is a multifaceted individual with a deep passion for literature, swimming, and art. Notably, she supported herself during college by selling her artwork, showcasing her creativity and entrepreneurial spirit.

PT proudly identifies her greatest accomplishment as being the mother of two exceptionally talented sons, one in the field of computer engineering and the other in banking. Her joy extends to her three grandchildren, all of whom she describes as loving and talented.

Sharing her life philosophy, PT emphasizes the importance of treating everyone equally and expecting reciprocal treatment. This mantra, she believes, is vital for fostering positive connections and understanding among individuals.

Despite her resilience and success, PT faced a health challenge that resulted in a dramatic loss of weight. Thanks to the support of friends and the intervention of Meals on Wheels (MOW), along with protein drinks, PT not only regained some lost weight but is now back to her normal weight! Expressing deep gratitude, she praises the MOW program and highlights the kindness of her drivers. She also says, “My drivers are so darling!”



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Pasta Primavera

Prep Time: 10 Min. | Cook Time: 20 Min.
Total Time: 30 Min. | Serves: 2



Ingredients

5 oz	Penne Pasta
1 TBS	EV00, plus some for finishing
2	Cloves of Garlic, sliced
½	Medium Yellow Squash, sliced into thin half-moons
½	Medium Zucchini, sliced into thin half-moons
½	Bunch of Asparagus, sliced into 1-inch pieces
½ C	Cherry Tomatoes, halved
½ C	Thinly sliced Red Onion (Torpedo if available)
1 Tsp	Sea Salt (Flake Style)
½ C	Frozen Peas (if frozen thaw, if fresh add in Step 2 after 2 minutes)
¼ C	Pecorino Cheese, Grated
3 TBS	Fresh Lemon Juice
-	Red Pepper Flakes to taste (or not)
1 C	Fresh Basil Leaves, plus some for decoration
-	Black Pepper to taste, always freshly ground

Instructions:

Step 1: Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Prepare the pasta according to the package instructions, cooking until al dente. Drain and toss with a drizzle of Olive Oil to prevent sticking.

Step 2: Heat the oil in a large, deep skillet over medium heat. Add the Garlic, Squash, Zucchini, Asparagus, Tomatoes, Onion, Salt and several grinds of Pepper and saute for 3 to 4 minutes, or until the vegetables are tender.

Step 3: Add the Pasta, Peas, Cheese, Lemon Juice, and a pinch of Red Pepper Flakes and toss to combine. Stir in the Basil.

Step 4: Season to taste, garnish with more Basil, and serve.

Serving Suggestion:
Just before Step 4 above, add some lightly grilled Salmon with an extra sprinkle of Lemon Juice and Pecorino Cheese.

RECIPE ADAPTED FROM LOVE & LEMONS



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