

# CONNECTIONS

FALL 2020

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## Meaningful Lives

People can continue to live meaningful lives as they adapt to the challenges of living with dementia. Dr. Phyllis Braudy Harris, a Professor in the Department of Sociology and Director of the Aging Studies Program at John Carroll University wanted to understand the concept of resilience in persons diagnosed with dementia. What Dr. Braudy Harris found was that many individuals with dementia have shown great resilience in continuing to live meaningful lives as they live with dementia. Dr. Braudy Harris said this, “the resilience of the human spirit, the human capacity to adapt and survive in the face of adversity.

What Dr. Braudy Harris found in her research study was this: There was ‘**ordinary magic**’ in the everyday lives of persons living with dementia. This magic was based on their ability to do the best they could with the abilities they had. How did these individuals find **magic** in their lives and continue to live well after a diagnosis of dementia?

- ***They accepted their diagnosis and the things they couldn’t change but focused on what they could change***
- ***A positive attitude and self concept – “I live with dementia, I am not dementia”***
- ***They drew on their problem-solving and coping skills***
- ***They drew upon social support networks such as family and friends and remain productive members of their communities***
- ***They were willing to accept help and use available community resources***

Individuals living with dementia who have participated in early stage programs shared their stories of resilience and hope as they cope with the challenges of living with dementia.



*“It can be easy to become overwhelmed at times. Know yourself, know what makes you feel that you have taken on too much. Everyone is different. Allow time after a busy day to recharge. I pace myself now, and I take recovery days to get some rest. Give yourself permission to rest, relax, and take care of yourself. I listen to soothing music. Take a step back, take a breath of fresh air and calm down if you are feeling overwhelmed.”*

*“Talk to others who are living with dementia. Go to a group. You will feel safe there. We all have similar problems, you will find that you meet others who understand you. You can support each other.”*

*“Be kind to yourself. Accept that you will have good days and bad days. Always say to yourself after a difficult day, tomorrow will be a better day.”*

*“I was angry and frustrated when I was first diagnosed with dementia. I had to experience these feelings. Then, I began to look at living life one day at a time, focusing on the positive aspects of life, I am not angry now. I accept what I cannot change but I focus on the best of my life. I feel calmer now, more relaxed.”*

*“Conversation can be harder for me now. I may lose my train of thought and if there is a group of people I get lost in the conversation. If you feel that way, take a moment, ask the other person to give you a minute to collect your thoughts. Help people to understand that it might be harder to have a conversation and maybe speaking with one person at a time might be better.”*

*“I speak up now. I tell people what I need and what I want. I live with dementia, I am not dementia. I tell people that I have had some changes because of my dementia but I am still me.”*

If you are interested in finding more tips and strategies as you live with dementia consider the ‘By Us For Us’ Guides. These are guides written by and for persons living with dementia and their care partners. You can find this information here:

<https://the-ria.ca/resources/by-us-for-us-guides/>

Please also contact the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region if you have any questions, concerns or need for support on your journey of living with dementia.

Please check our website for a variety of virtual activities at:

[www.alzheimerniagara.ca/online](http://www.alzheimerniagara.ca/online)

Source: International Journal of Aging and Human Development, Vol.67(1) 43-61, 2008. Another Wrinkle in the Debate about Successful Aging: The Undervalued concept of Resilience and the Lived Experience of Dementia, Dr. Phyllis Braudy Harris PhD. John Carroll University, Cleveland, Ohio





## Adult Colouring May Relax Your Brain

Adult colouring, over the last few years has become the latest craze. Where we once found children enjoying the benefits of a good colouring book, we now find adults sitting with coloured pencils or crayons enjoying the same. Yes, adults are losing themselves in intricate patterns of colouring pages and books. Adult colouring has become a very popular form of relaxation, including for this writer.

But, what does this wonderful pastime do to our brains to produce calm and pleasure? According to clinical psychologist, Scott M. Bea, Psy.D. it has everything to do with refocusing our attention. As he noted, “adult colouring requires modest attention focused outside of self-awareness. It is a simple activity that takes us outside ourselves. In the same way, cutting the lawn, knitting or taking a Sunday drive can be relaxing.”

How can adult colouring help to relax people?

Dr. Bea said there are three reasons why adult colouring can be calming:

- **Attention flows away from ourselves.**

A simple act of colouring takes your attention away from yourself, and onto the present-moment event. “In this way, it is very much like a meditative exercise,” Dr. Bea says.

- **It relaxes the brain.**

When your thoughts are focused on a simple activity, your brain tends to relax. Dr. Bea says this, “we are not disturbed by our own thoughts, the difficulties of life evaporate from our awareness, and both our bodies and our brains may find this rewarding.”

- **It is a pleasurable activity.**

There is no expectation of the colouring activity, just pure enjoyment. Dr. Bea said that even if you make a mistake on the colouring page there is no consequence. “It is not a test of your capabilities,” said Dr. Bea.

Dr. Bea does say however, that adult colouring may not be for everyone. He believes that if you enjoyed colouring as a child, you may respond positively to colouring as an adult. Dr. Bea said that the benefits of adult colouring are similar to the therapeutic benefits of listening to your favourite music.

Dr. Bea believes that life can be very stressful and notes that we are always trying to find new ways to reduce tension and restore feelings of well-being. With the stress we are experiencing with COVID-19, colouring may be just the thing to help you unwind and relax. Have a look at our colouring pages and enjoy.

Reference: [health.clevelandclinic.org](http://health.clevelandclinic.org), May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2020









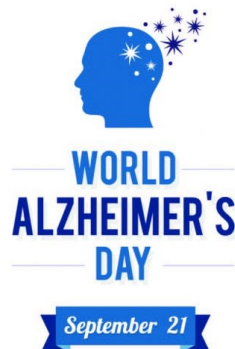


# Did You Know...



This is the time of year that the poet John Keats called the 'Season of mists and yellow fruitfulness,' autumn is a season famous for its harvest time, turning leaves, cooling temperatures and darkening nights.

- The month of September will mark the 9<sup>th</sup> World Alzheimer's Month, an international campaign to raise awareness and challenge the stigma of dementia. This year's campaign is called, "Let's talk about dementia." Through talking we hope to break down the fear and stigma of dementia and encourage people to seek out information, support and guidance. This is even more important as we navigate the COVID-19 pandemic. ([www.worldalzmonth.org](http://www.worldalzmonth.org))
- Monday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020 is World Alzheimer's Day. Log in to the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region's Facebook page to view our live intimate conversation with our Client Advisory Group about Dementia. [facebook.com/AlzheimerSocietyNiagara/](https://facebook.com/AlzheimerSocietyNiagara/)
- The Annual Coffee Break campaign for the Alzheimer Society has been rebranded and is now called "Social with a Purpose." Please go to the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region's website for more information. ([www.alzheimerniagara.ca](http://www.alzheimerniagara.ca))
- There are two different dates when autumn could be said to begin. Autumn, as defined by the Earth's orbit around the Sun, begins on the equinox, which falls on September 22<sup>nd</sup> or 23<sup>rd</sup>
- One of the most stunning sights of autumn is the turning of the leaves. The shorter days signal the trees to prepare for winter. Winter does not provide enough light for photosynthesis to occur, so as the days shorten through autumn, the trees close down their food production and reduce the amount of chlorophyll in their leaves
- Without chlorophyll in the leaves to make them green, other chemicals, flavonoids, take over, producing the beautiful reds, yellows and ambers of autumn.
- A study in the Journal of Aging Research found that babies born during the autumn months are more likely to live to 100! Their study found that 30% of USA centenarians (people who live to be 100) were born during the autumn months.







## Autumn Fun

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

The following list of words can be found horizontally and vertically:

ACORN  
FALL  
FOLIAGE  
HARVEST  
LEAVES

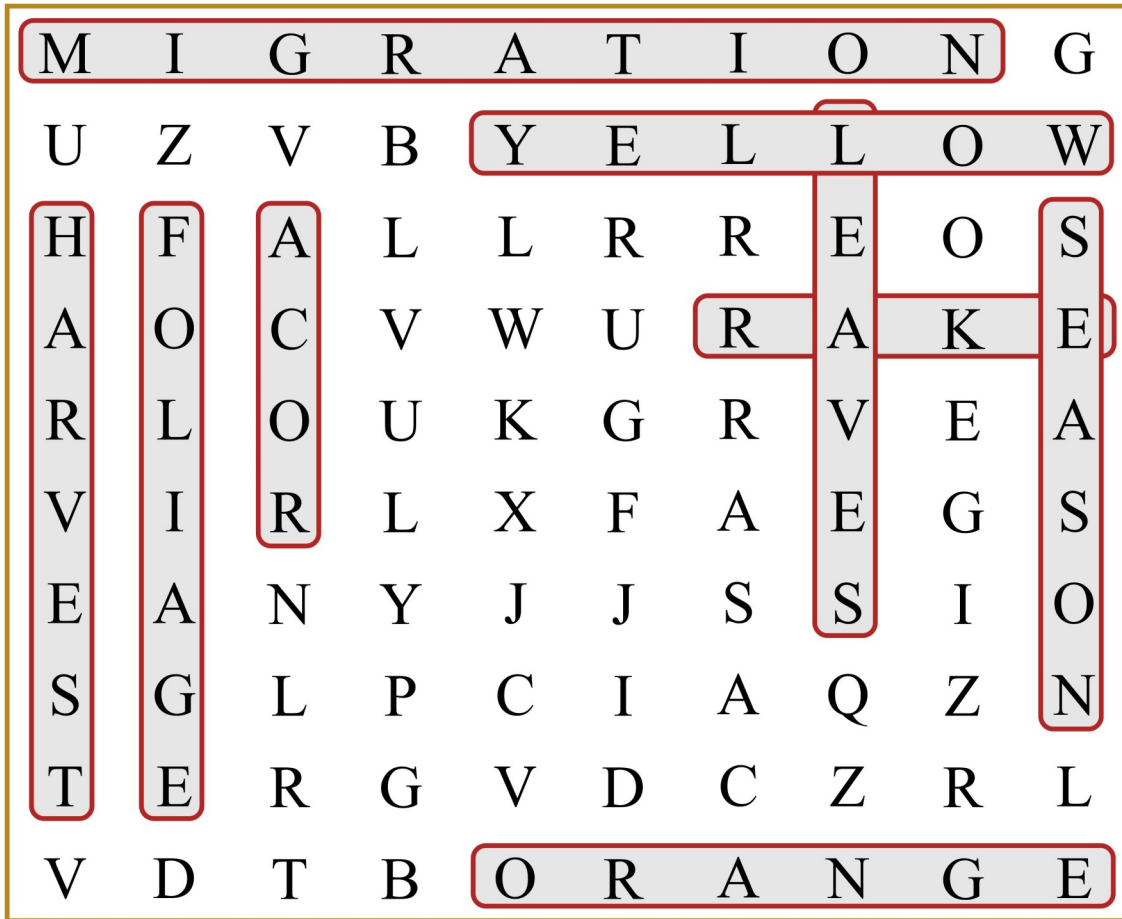


ORANGE  
MIGRATION  
RAKE  
SEASON  
YELLOW



## Autumn Fun

### SOLUTION



- ✓ ACORN
- ✓ FALL
- ✓ FOLIAGE
- ✓ HARVEST
- ✓ LEAVES
- ✓ ORANGE
- ✓ MIGRATION
- ✓ RAKE
- ✓ SEASON
- ✓ YELLOW





“Notice that Autumn is more the season of the soul than of nature.”

- Friedrich Nietzsche



# Letter From the Editor



Welcome to our fall edition of Connections. I continue to thank Cynthia Krawczuk, Communications Coordinator for taking this writer's rough draft articles, researched and written from my home office, and turning them into this wonderful newsletter.

While this newsletter is in production the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region continue to work remotely from home. Please have a look at our website for a variety of virtual activities.

We continue to live in a world where COVID-19 is ever present. We are physically distancing while visiting with family and friends, and we are opening up our "social bubbles" a little more. We are wearing masks when out in public and washing our hands more than ever before.

We hope you enjoy the articles and thank you to those who shared their perspectives on **ordinary magic** and dementia.

Please let us know if you have any ideas for future editions of this newsletter. If you wish to be interviewed for a feature article please contact me at 905-687-6856, extension 543.

Stay well and stay safe,

Yours sincerely,  
Gina

