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## Benefits of Attending the Early-Stage Learning Series

'Beyond Words' early-stage learning series is a program offered by the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region for persons with early-stage dementia. We are so pleased to announce that the series will now be increased from 8 to 10 weeks. 'Beyond Words' provides an opportunity for persons with early-stage dementia to share thoughts, feelings, coping strategies and offer peer support in a relaxed and supportive environment.

Current participants of the early-stage learning series unanimously agree that the group makes them feel great and they look forward to attending. They feel that people forget they're still the same person and notice that, as others pass by them, no eye contact is made; therefore, they enjoy the interaction with others who understand. Group members state that they are all experiencing the same losses, such as their driver's license and their independence. Sometimes they feel lonely and participating in the group gives them the socialization they need and an opportunity to meet new friends; it's also someplace where they can share what's bothering them. As one group member put it, "something changed in my heart since coming here."

If you have any questions about the early-stage learning series, please contact Gina Bendo at (905) 687-6856, extension 543.





## Dr. Phill

Well-known in the Niagara Region, Dr. Phillip O'Reilly currently sits on the board of the Alzheimer Society of Niagara Region. He is also offering his medical expertise to answer any questions you may have about Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. If you have a question for our very own Dr. Phill, please see the last page for how you can contact us.



Dear Dr. Phill,

The holiday traditions are very important to me and I am feeling sad that I can no longer do the things I once did, for example I used to help with the Christmas cards and can no longer do that. I am also not able to cook a large meal for my family; I sometimes feel like a guest in my own home. I know things have changed since my diagnosis of dementia but how can I enjoy the holiday season with family and friends?

I am sure that you are finding that life has changed in many ways. The abilities that we all take for granted do not come as easily for you as they once did. It is good to think ahead about how you can still find ways to enjoy the special occasions with family and friends. Family traditions can be maintained but your role in how they are carried out may be different. For example, in sending out your Christmas cards, you could make it a fun activity to do with your grandchildren – you get the list and have them help you write them out – maybe even have them making/decorating the cards. Social gatherings and dinner could be a 'potluck' affair with everybody contributing their favourite part of the menu or you could write each menu item on a piece of paper and have them pick them out of a hat as a 'surprise' activity. You taking the initiative to do things differently gives you a sense of control of your circumstances. It's also very good for maximizing your cognitive abilities since doing things in new ways creates new connections in your brain.

It's also important to let your family know how you are feeling. You may be pleasantly surprised at how they too can come up with ideas that will allow you to still play a major role in the festivities without having to do it all. In the end, having others equally engaged may add to the fun for everyone. Most people want to help but are not always sure how to approach the situation – you taking the lead empowers everyone. I hope these thoughts provide added enjoyment this holiday season.

All the best, Dr. Phill

## Laughter is the Best Medicine

Research has shown health benefits of laughter ranging from strengthening the immune system to [reducing food cravings](#) to increasing one's [threshold for pain](#). There's even an emerging therapeutic field known as [humour therapy](#) to help people heal more quickly, among other things. Humour also has several important stress relieving benefits.

- T.V. and Movies: There's no shortage of laughter opportunities from the entertainment world, both at the theater and in the aisles of the [video stores](#), as well as at home with [T.V. comedies](#). While wasting your time watching something marginally funny may actually frustrate you, watching truly hilarious movies and shows is an easy way to get laughter into your life whenever you need it.
- Laugh With Friends: Going to a movie or comedy club with friends is a great way to get more laughter in your life. The contagious effects of laughter may mean you'll laugh more than you otherwise would have during the show, plus you'll have jokes to reference at later times. Having friends over for a party or game night is also a great setup for laughter and other good feelings.
- Find Humour in Your Life: Instead of complaining about life's frustrations, try to laugh about them. If something is so frustrating or depressing it's ridiculous, realize that you could 'look back on it and laugh.' Think of how it will sound as a story you could tell to your friends, and then see if you can laugh about it now. With this attitude, you may also find yourself being more lighthearted and silly, giving yourself and those around you more to laugh about. Approach life in a more joyful way and you'll find you're less stressed about negative events, and you'll achieve the health benefits of laughter.

- 'Fake It Until You Make It': Just as studies show the positive effects of smiling occur whether the smile is fake or real, faked laughter also provides the benefits mentioned above. So smile more and fake laughter; you'll still achieve positive effects, and the fake merriment may lead to real smiles and laughter.

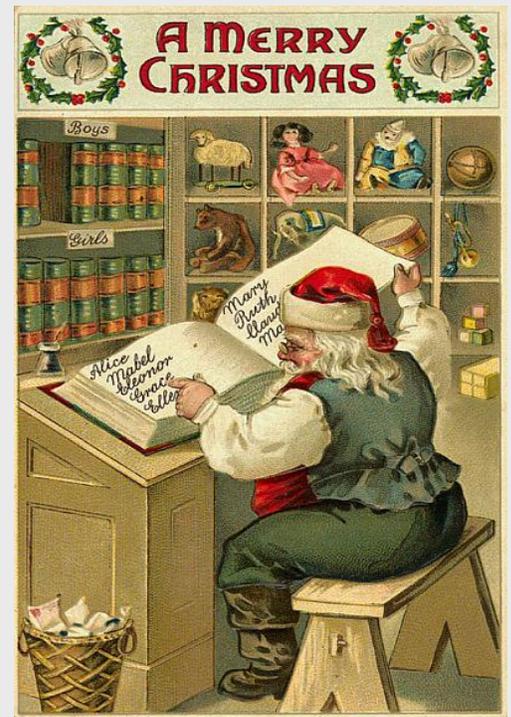
Source:

<http://stress.about.com/od/stresshealth/a/laughter.htm>

**off the mark** by Mark Parisi  
www.offthemark.com



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Alzheimer Society of Niagara  
Region's

## News & Events

**Best Friends Coffee Club** is on the second and fourth Thursday of each month. We invite you to join us for the Best Friends Coffee Club!

Mark your calendars for our annual **"Treasured Memories"** session on January 23, 2010. Children & young adults are invited to a two hour workshop focusing on a child's/teenager's view of dementia. This day will benefit any child or teenager who has a relationship with someone who has a dementia.

Manulife **Walk for Memories** in support of the Alzheimer Society is taking place on Sunday, January 31, 2010 at the Pen Centre.

**A Changing Melody** is a conference for persons with early-stage dementia and care partners. The conference will be taking place on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 2010 and registration will be available in the New Year.

For more information please call (905) 687-3914.



## Letter from the Editor

Welcome to our Christmas edition of Connections, our newsletter for persons with early-stage dementia. We know the holidays are filled with opportunities for togetherness, celebration and laughter but they can also be hectic and stressful. Take time for yourself. Let go of some of the expectations you place upon yourself. Consider creating new and simple traditions with the help of family and friends. Give yourself permission to do only what you can manage.

At this time of year we also focus on what we are grateful for and I would like to take this opportunity to thank our wonderful "Connections" team. A big thank you to Cynthia Krawczuk, our Graphic Designer and creative genius! I also want to thank our assistant editors, Carolyn Dowd and Sarah Putman. This newsletter would not be possible without Cynthia, Carolyn and Sarah's valued contributions and guidance. Please, take some time, grab a cup of tea, coffee or hot chocolate and put your feet up and enjoy reading your newsletter.

Happy Holidays,  
Gina Bendo Reg.N

## Current Research

Reminyl ER(extended release) is one of a group of medications called "cholinesterase inhibitors". Reminyl ER works principally by reducing the breakdown of acetylcholine, a chemical in the brain important for memory and learning. It has also been suggested that Reminyl ER enhances the action of acetylcholine by making the receptors it interacts with in the brain more responsive.

Reminyl ER treatment is not a cure for dementia as it does not affect the underlying process of the disease.

Please check with your doctor if you have questions about this medication.

Source: [www.alzheimer.ca](http://www.alzheimer.ca)

## Contact & Feedback

What I liked: \_\_\_\_\_

What I didn't like: \_\_\_\_\_

Things I would like to see in the next issue: \_\_\_\_\_

How I would like to contribute: \_\_\_\_\_

My question for Dr. Phill: \_\_\_\_\_

Other comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### How to reach us

#### By mail:

403 Ontario St., Unit #1  
St. Catharines, ON L2N  
1L5

#### By phone:

905-687-3914 extension  
543 (Gina)

#### By email:

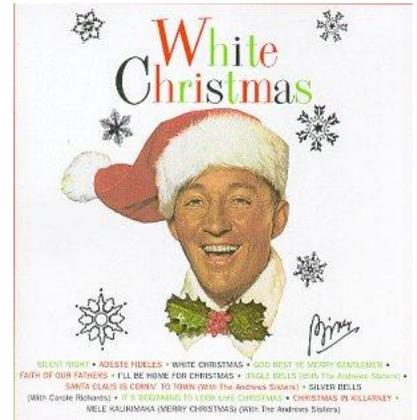
[gbendo@alzheimerniagara.ca](mailto:gbendo@alzheimerniagara.ca)



## Remember when...

In 1942, the Song "White Christmas" written by Irving Berlin, and sung by Bing Crosby topped the US Billboard charts for 11 weeks straight. White Christmas returned to the number one spot in 1945 and 1946 becoming the first ever single to have three separate runs at the top of US charts. Since then, the song has been sung by over 100 artists in all different genres of music. White Christmas is ranked the number one Christmas song of all time.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White\\_Christmas\\_\(song\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Christmas_(song))



## "White Christmas" Lyrics



I'm dreaming of a white Christmas  
Just like the ones I used to know  
Where the treetops glisten,  
and children listen  
To hear sleigh bells in the snow

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas  
With every Christmas card I write  
May your days be merry and bright  
And may all your Christmases be white

I'm dreaming of a white Christmas  
With every Christmas card I write  
May your days be merry and bright  
And may all your Christmases be white

- Irving Berlin 1942



# Christmas Word Search



merry                  christmas                  carols                  holly

santa                  presents                  tree                  star

mistletoe                  wreath



[www.ActivityVillage.co.uk](http://www.ActivityVillage.co.uk)





## Easy Sugar Cookies

- 2 3/4 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 1/2 cups white sugar
- 1 egg
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract



## Directions

- Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C). In a small bowl, stir together flour, baking soda, and baking powder. Set aside.
- In a large bowl, cream together the butter and sugar until smooth. Beat in egg and vanilla. Gradually blend in the dry ingredients. Roll rounded teaspoonfuls of dough into balls, and place onto ungreased cookie sheets.
- Bake 8 to 10 minutes in the preheated oven, or until golden. Let stand on cookie sheet two minutes before removing to cool on wire racks.

