

Forget-Me-Not Breakfast teaches caregivers communication and brain fitness strategies

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Have you ever considered how much thought goes into holding a simple conversation?

There's vocabulary, grammar, syntax, content considerations; then there are the senses – hearing and seeing; and history and relationship – how you speak to your child may be different than how you speak to your spouse or to family and friends.

Now throw in Alzheimer's and other dementias, diseases that affect your ability to communicate because the parts of the brain that helps you do so are damaged.

Simple conversations are no longer simple for people living with dementia (PLWD).

But people who attend the Alzheimer Society of York Region's (AS York) Forget-Me-Not Breakfast April 27 will learn "practical strategies on how to communicate with people living with dementia to optimize their well-being and to decrease caregiver stress," said Dr. J.B. Orange, professor in the school of communications and sciences and disorders at Western University and the scientific director of the Canadian Centre for Activity and Aging at Western, and the keynote speaker at the annual event, which takes place at King's Riding Golf Course, 14700 Bathurst St. in King City.

"People don't understand communication in our every day lives and take for granted talking to someone (or) texting



Photo/COURTESY

Jill Hewlett will provide take-away tools to improve cognitive health during her presentation at the Forget-Me-Not Breakfast. Learn more on Page 2.

someone when there is challenges getting the message out."

During the breakfast, Dr. Orange said he will educate and teach participants practical strategies to help caregivers communicate with PLWD with the goal "making lives of family members better. (Because) what happens with the person living with dementia happens with the caregivers."

The strategies are also intended to ensure PLWD will be treated with dignity and respect.

Dr. Orange said when some people don't know how to communicate with people living with dementia, they tend to use speech, language and communications features described as "elder speak"

or "baby talk", which is over-accommodated speaking.

"Accommodating communication is helpful, but if it's over accommodating... they (PLWD) feel they are being patronized."

By enhancing and learning new ways to communicate, caregivers, both informal, such as family members, and formal, those who are paid, learn how to speak so people living with dementia can not only understand and participate in conversation, decreasing feelings of isolation, but also aren't left feeling like they are being spoken down to.

Dr. Orange said his presentation is for "people who are eager to learn new information and to learn how to

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Quick, easy take-away strategies for brain health provided at breakfast

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(communicate) in better ways than what they are doing now, to enhance their quality of life and well-being. The session is intended to open their eyes at novel ways to communicate or to reaffirm that what they are doing works.”

Guest speaker Jill Hewlett said she is also hoping participants in the annual Forget-Me-Not Breakfast will begin to understand the importance of self-care in her hour-long session and learn take-away tools they can apply immediately.

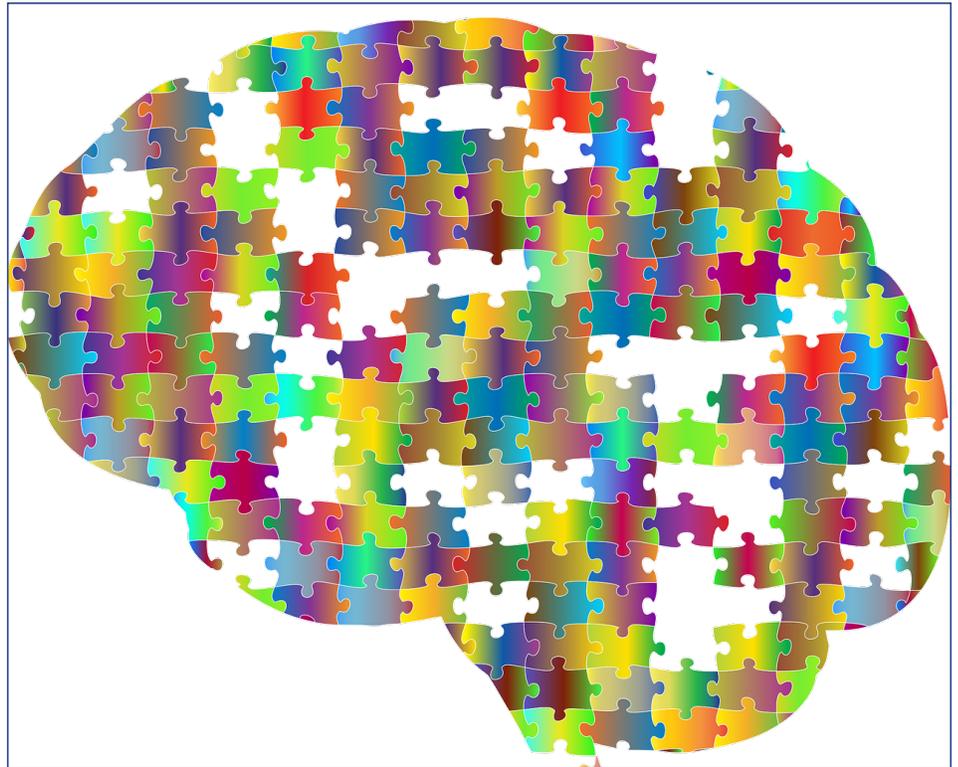
“In this day and age, people are so busy and stressed. We all need strategies that help us shift back into balance and connection; especially caregivers who give so much and so freely to others.

“...Caregivers don’t want to follow the same path as those they are caring for. Aging isn’t an option. How we age is up to us.”

Hewlett said people need to give themselves permission to care for themselves.

“You can’t give what you don’t have. It’s so obvious, but it’s true. How you show love to your family and care for them, you have to do for yourself as well.”

During her interactive session, Hewlett said she will teach participants “Brain activation strategies that are quick, easy,



and effective. It will help them increase their energy, be calmer, communicate more effectively, improve memory and invest in self-care.”

Hewlett said the great thing about the brain fitness strategies is they are transferable, meaning people can go home and teach their loved ones ways to deal with their current issues and cognitive decline. And the strategies can be done while

sitting and takes little time.

“I always make my presentations simple, relatable and fun. When you are equipped with the knowledge and tools, and able to put the strategies to use right away, people become very excited.

“Knowledge is power and people become empowered and equipped to effectively participate in self-care, and in filling their own well.”

Forget-Me-Not Breakfast details

The Forget-Me-Not Breakfast begins at 8:30 a.m. with breakfast and networking. Dr. Orange delivers his keynote address, followed by a Q&A session and coffee. Hewlett’s session is followed by a Q&A. The breakfast ends at 12:30 with a raffle.

Tickets are \$50 each. Visit <http://bit.ly/ForgetMeNot19> to order. Sponsorship opportunities are also available. Contact Lauren O’Brien at lobrien@alzheimeryork.com or call 905-726-3477, ext. 244 for more information.