



# spotlight on health

## The Power Of Love

### Maintaining A Fulfilling Relationship Despite The Challenges Of Alzheimer's Disease

(NAPSA)—Bed and Breakfast owner Meg Curtis knew that something was very wrong with her husband when she discovered three years ago that the bank was ready to foreclose on their home and inn. Skip, usually so meticulous and timely with the bills, couldn't remember when he had last paid the couple's mortgage. Soon after, Skip was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease at age 59.

Although Meg and Skip were devastated by the initial diagnosis, they have refused to let Alzheimer's throw their lives and love completely off course. Though the Curtis' daily life running the B&B is different from what they had envisioned, they find ways to enjoy a fulfilling relationship. Skip stays active and assists with daily tasks like setting the table, cleaning the dishes, tending to the dogs and feeding the sheep.



#### Symptoms of Alzheimer's Disease:

##### When to Call Your Doctor

- Memory loss
- Problems with language, judgment
- Difficulty performing everyday activities
- Disorientation to time and place (not being able to remember the day or year)
- Changes in personality, behavior

Source: Alzheimer's Association

become severe enough to affect work, lifelong hobbies, and social life.

If you suspect a loved one has Alzheimer's disease, it's important to see a doctor right away for proper diagnosis and treatment with currently available medications. Partnering with a doctor to determine the best available treatment is key, but Meg also notes that it's important for caregivers to turn to others for support. "No one needs to experience Alzheimer's disease alone. Try to build a team of family members, friends, physicians, nurses, and others to help spread the responsibility." It's also helpful to identify local Alzheimer's organizations and support groups.

For more information on Alzheimer's disease, visit [www.AlzheimersComboCare.com](http://www.AlzheimersComboCare.com).

#### Meg's Caregiving Tips

- If your loved one is struggling to communicate, gently try to provide the word.
- Frame questions and instructions in a positive way.
- Allow enough time for a response and be careful not to interrupt.
- Continue doing activities that you can enjoy together. Building on current skills generally works better than trying to teach something new.

Meg knows firsthand that caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's disease can be challenging, but she has learned many ways to make daily life more manageable and maintain

a strong relationship. Meg says, "It's essential to keep the lines of communication open. When you talk to someone with Alzheimer's, it's important to remember to use a calm tone of voice, to always treat the person with dignity and respect, and to use humor when possible."

Alzheimer's disease afflicts more than 5.3 million people in the United States, affecting all types of relationships including countless marriages. Alzheimer's is not a part of "normal aging." It is a progressive and degenerative brain disorder that causes problems with memory, thinking, behavior, and the ability to perform daily functions. Eventually, these problems

#### Currently Available Treatments for Moderate to Severe Alzheimer's Disease

Although there is no cure for Alzheimer's disease, there are effective FDA-approved treatments available, such as combination therapy with medications from the two available classes:

- One class, called "cholinesterase inhibitors," includes several choices of medications such as Aricept® (donepezil).
- The other class, NMDA receptor antagonists, includes only one medication called Namenda® (memantine HCl). When memantine and donepezil are used together, they can help slow down decline in cognitive, functional and behavioral symptoms, which may help improve quality of life for patients and caregivers.

**Note to Editors:** Namenda® (memantine HCl) is indicated for the treatment of moderate to severe Alzheimer's disease. Namenda is contraindicated in patients with known hypersensitivity to memantine HCl or any excipients used in the formulation. The most common adverse events reported with Namenda vs. placebo ( $\geq 5\%$  and higher than placebo) were dizziness, confusion, headache, and constipation. In patients with severe renal impairment, the dosage should be reduced. Please see accompanying full prescribing information for Namenda.