

Making Every Moment Matter: Tips For Sharing And Preserving Family Memories When A Loved One Has Alzheimer's

(NAPSA)—Whether it's during the holidays, a birthday celebration or a family reunion, sharing memories with loved ones is an enjoyable and healthy way to remember times past. It can often be very frustrating, however, when someone in the family has Alzheimer's disease.

An estimated 4.5 million Americans have Alzheimer's disease, and as baby boomers age, that number is expected to triple by 2050. It's important to remember, however, that Alzheimer's patients can still appreciate memories even if they don't respond in the same manner as before their illness. Learning ways in which to positively interact with an Alzheimer's patient is crucial for re-connecting with your loved one and sharing memories for as long as possible.

"The toughest part for many families facing Alzheimer's is looking back," says Joanne Koenig Coste, renowned Alzheimer's care pioneer and author of *Learning to Speak Alzheimer's*. "They need to stop talking about how Mom or Grandpa used to be and focus on who she or he is now. The best thing you can do is to go to *their* reality. If they're reminiscing about childhood and think they're still eight years old, don't insist that 70 years have passed. Enjoy their stories."



Koenig Coste offers additional tips:

Look at photo albums and videos. Flipping through a photo album or watching a video together allows loved ones to share an enjoyable experience. "Old black-and-white photos—sometimes even photos of absolute strangers—evoke strong memories for Alzheimer's patients," explained Koenig Coste. "Make copies of photos and let your loved one write or draw on them, or show a wedding video because that's a joyous occasion that may make them remember their own wedding."

Make the most of family pets. Don't underestimate the therapeutic power of animals. Animals provide a nonthreatening,

healthy interaction for Alzheimer's patients. Patients often require undivided love and attention, something animals naturally provide.

Play music. Music can help stimulate a patient's memories. Music from the patient's youth often triggers memories, but modern New Age music is also helpful—providing soothing background music.

Encourage children to spend time with patients. "It's so important to designate time for children to spend with the patient," Koenig Coste said. "I think the worst mistake people make is keeping children away from their grandparents for fear of how the children will someday remember them. Children have a positive, healing effect on Alzheimer's patients."

While nothing can turn back time and restore a patient's memories, it's important that your loved one see a physician if you think he or she may have Alzheimer's disease. Family members of Alzheimer's patients also need to take care of themselves. Ortho-McNeil Neurologics Inc. sponsors a free program called *SharingCare*. It provides caregivers with tools to help cope with Alzheimer's disease and its effects. For more information, visit www.SharingCare.com or www.orthomcneilneurologics.com.