



Age / Dementia Friendly Greater Fall River Coalition

ALZHEIMER'S & DEMENTIA

Forgetfulness and diagnosable memory loss are not the same. Remember, Dementia is not a “normal” part of aging, and if you have concerns about yourself or a loved one, talk to your doctor.

Know the Signs of Dementia

- Difficulty performing daily tasks
- Frequently forgetting words
- Difficulty making decisions



Worried about your memory?

- Talk with trusted friends or family members about what you have been noticing and what you are worried about. Starting the conversation is the first step, but you are the best person for the job.
- Tell your doctor and ask for preliminary testing.
- Do your best to keep a routine of exercise and healthy eating habits.

Connect with the Alzheimer's Association by using the 24/7 Helpline @ 800 272 3900. They can help guide you with tips and resources to help support your individual needs.

Or visit them on the web at www.alz.org/MANH.



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Mental Wellness in Later Life

No matter what age you are, it is important to look out for your own emotional well-being. Taking charge of your mental wellness can make a big difference.

Mindfulness is a type of meditation where you focus on what you're sensing and feeling in the moment, without interpretation or judgment. It involves breathing methods, guided imagery, and other practices to relax the body and mind and help reduce stress.

Try Mindful Breathing:

- Find a safe, comfortable seat
- Close your eyes and notice your breathing and any feelings in your body - start to relax
- Tune in to your breathing and slow it down - in through your nose, out through your mouth
- Notice your thoughts, but let them go, try not to follow your thoughts - stay present
- If you have trouble staying present - be kind to yourself, this is harder than it seems
- Stay here, focused on your breathing without tending to thoughts for 5 minutes.



Mindfulness can help you achieve:

More Patience	Increased Compassion
Better Focus and Productivity	Less Stress and Anxiety
Heightened Body Awareness	

*If you or someone else needs support, please contact the Bristol Elder Services Information & Referral Department at (774) 627-1390;
 TTY: (508) 646-9704 or MassRelay 711
 Email us at info@bristolelder.org or visit our website: www.bristolelder.org*



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Loss & Grief in Later Life

Whether it be a partner, child or friend, it is no secret that aging comes with loss and, therefore, grief. After many years of companionship, you may find that adjusting to loss is even harder in later life. Grief may last for many months...or even years. There is no “correct” amount of time for grief to last.

It's never too late or too early to seek comfort and understanding.

Here are some things you may want to do:



- Find a “grief friend” - someone who doesn’t mind talking about sadness; perhaps a person with a similar story.
- Join a bereavement group that meets regularly. You can share as much or as little as you like, and your insights may help another person.
- Honor your loved one by volunteering in a meaningful way to a cause dear to them.

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Older Adults and Alcohol

As people age, they may become more sensitive to alcohol's effects. Over time, someone whose drinking habits haven't changed may find she or he has a problem. At the same time, many medicines and herbal remedies can be dangerous when mixed with alcohol. Always ask your doctor or pharmacist if you can safely drink alcohol. Read the labels on all medicines.

- Sensitivity to alcohol increases as you age, making elders more susceptible to falls, auto accidents and other unintentional injuries.
- Alcohol can worsen some health conditions like osteoporosis, diabetes, high blood pressure, stroke, ulcers, memory loss and others.
- Cough syrups, laxatives and some other medications contain alcohol, further compromising your health if you also drink.
- Compensating with alcohol to help alleviate loneliness and isolation can be very dangerous.

If you think you have a problem with alcohol, there are steps you can take:

- *Talk to your doctor or healthcare professional.*
- *Find a support group for older adults with addiction issues.*
- *Consult your pharmacist about medications you may be taking that may adversely interact with alcohol.*



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Social Isolation and Loneliness

Many of the normal processes and transitions that happen as one grows older, including the death of close loved ones, impaired mobility, and hearing loss, put individuals at increased risk for loneliness and isolation.

The good news is that with greater awareness, you can take steps to maintain and strengthen your ties to family and friends, expand your social circles and become more involved in our community.

These Tips Can Help:

- ◆ Increase your social contacts with others by scheduling a time each day to call or visit a friend, meet your neighbors, or write letters to long distance friends.
- ◆ Join an exercise group offering low impact options like chair yoga or aerobics, for example.
- ◆ Revisit an old hobby, or learn a new skill - joining with others with the same interests. A virtual get-together can be a great option for those with online experience.
- ◆ Familiarize yourself with the local SRTA routes as well as other transportation options in your area.



Strengthen those all-important bonds - because when we connect, we all thrive !!

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Substance / Alcohol Abuse and Older Adults

Substance and alcohol use problems among older adults in the United States are increasing, yet these problems often remain hidden and misunderstood. It is important to realize that prevention works, treatment is effective, and people can recover.

But...there are many myths and lots of misinformation:



- ◆ “They’re too old to stop drinking or using substances now”
- ◆ “Older adults don’t misuse substances”

Research has shown that compared to younger adults:

- Older adults are just as likely, or even more likely, to benefit from a treatment program
- This population may also be more motivated to complete treatment

If you or someone else needs assistance and support, you may contact the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration

hotline: 1-800-662-HELP(4357)...or

the Bristol Elder Services Information & Referral Department

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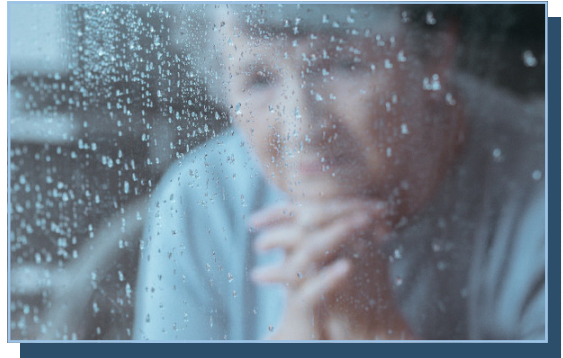
Suicide and Aging

Have you or someone you love had these negative thoughts?

- “They’d be better off without me.”
- “Don’t worry – I won’t be here to bother you much longer.”
- “I can’t deal with it anymore. Life is too hard.”
- “I no longer want to live.”
- “Death seems like the only way out.”

The following warning signs suggest that a person could be at risk of suicide:

- * Talking about wanting to die or harm oneself
- * Creating a plan to harm yourself
- * Talking hopelessness or having no reason to live
- * Talking about feeling trapped or in unbearable pain
- * Talking about being a burden to others



Taking care of mental health is just as important as taking care of physical health. If you or someone you know is showing these warning signs of suicide, seek help. The belief that we should be able to cope on our own can prevent many of us from getting much-needed help.

SUICIDE CAN BE PREVENTED!

Samaritans Helpline 508-673-3777 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255).

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Looking out for the Well-Being of Yourself and Others

Are you in pain? Do you feel depressed? Are you lonely?

Have you experienced a loss?

Do you know someone who is experiencing these challenges?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, please know that help is available.

Your emotional well-being is affected by your health. Taking care of your physical and mental health will help you feel better. Here are some ways to help you build strong relationships with family, friends, and others.

Get Involved

- Take a class or volunteer in your community
- Start a new hobby or take up an old one

Help Others

- Observe the emotional well-being of your peers
- Encourage those struggling to get involved in activities or seek out a mental health professional

Take Care of Yourself

- Stay active and exercise regularly
- Maintain a healthy diet

Reach Out

- Volunteer to help others
- Participate in community activities and communicate with family and friends (virtually or by phone)

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Older Adults and Depression

As you get older, you may go through a lot of changes - death of loved ones, retirement, or medical problems. It's normal to feel uneasy, stressed, or sad. But after adjusting to the losses, many older adults feel well again. Depression is different. It interferes with daily life and normal functioning.

It is not a normal part of aging.

So ask yourself: Have you...

- lost interest in activities and interests you previously enjoyed?
- experienced changes in appetite and/or unintended weight gain or loss?
- persistently felt sad, anxious, or "empty?"
- been fatigued, less energetic, or felt like you're being "slowed down?"
- had difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions?
- had aches or pains, headaches, or digestive problems without a clear physical cause?
- experienced thoughts of death or suicide, or attempted suicide?

If the answer is "yes" to one or more of these symptoms, you may be depressed.

The good news is that with treatment, most older adults experiencing depression feel better !!



- Talk with your doctor
- Try counseling
- Seek social support
- Think about holistic therapies, such as acupuncture or massage
- Work on exercise and healthy eating

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