

Helping Darien seniors
live independently,
comfortably and with
dignity in their own
homes and the community
as long as possible

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OUT AND ABOUT

FALL 2014

VOLUME 6 ISSUE 3

Enhance Your Memory



Dear Friends –

The other day I went into a room and forgot what I went in for – again. Does this ever happen to you? It's what some people call a "senior moment" a non-medical term for a mental glitch, or memory lapse. These moments can be attributed to normal age related memory loss, but when is it something more? This issue of our newsletter should be helpful in providing guidance and ways to improve memory.

There is a lot of emphasis these days on staying physically healthy, but we should be just as concerned for our mental well-being and memory. We invite you to attend our **Annual Luncheon** on Tuesday, October 28th at 11:30 a.m. at the Darien Community Association (free for all Darien seniors), so you can stay sharp, and exercise your brain. The luncheon will be an enjoyable way to learn more about how to enhance your memory. Please see the information to the right and rsvp as soon as possible to save your seat.

You are also invited to our **Annual Meeting** on Tuesday, December 9th at 10:00 a.m. at Mather Center. Join our Board of Directors for refreshments and learn about our plans for the coming year.

Don't *forget* – we are here to help you – give us a call!

All the best,

Gina

Gina Z. Blum, Executive Director, **At Home In Darien**

You're invited!

Join the **At Home In Darien**
Board of Directors at their

Annual Meeting
Tuesday, December 9, 2014
at 10:00 a.m.

Mather Center Café Extension, 2 Renshaw Road
Join us for refreshments and learn more about
how we meet the needs of seniors in Darien.

RSVP by December 2nd **203.655.2227** or
Sandi@AtHomeInDarien.org

At Home In Darien and The Darien Community Association invite you to attend the

At Home In Darien **Annual Luncheon**

Train Your Brain for Enhanced Memory and Top Performance

Featuring

Jo Anne Harrison-Becker

MS in Gerontology and Community Psychology;
Therapeutic Recreation Director

Join us for an informative and interactive seminar on enhancing memory. The less we use our minds, the duller they become. But, the more we nurture our brains, the better thinkers we become and the more we can preserve our memory. Come learn 25 ways to develop a training regimen for your brain!

Tuesday, October 28, 2014
11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

Come at 11:30 and browse our informational tables. Lunch will be served at noon, followed by the speaker.

Darien Community Association
274 Middlesex Road, Darien

Free presentation and lunch
for all Darien Seniors

RSVP by October 20th
Space is limited, please respond early to
ensure a seat at this popular event.

203.655.2227


or

Sandi@AtHomeInDarien.org

New Home for At Home

We've moved to **Mather Center**, located adjacent to Town Hall at **2 Renshaw Road**. Come visit us in our new office, conveniently located next to the main gym. We can be easily accessed by using the ramp entrance in Town Hall's main circle, or through the new Senior Programs entrance of Mather Center (9am to 3pm) and then taking the stairs or elevator to the second floor. The **At Home** office is open Monday through Friday 9am to 4pm.

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The Brain's Neuroplasticity



By Beth Paris, Director
Darien Senior Program

The term neuroplasticity is in the media a lot lately. It is a term that describes the human brain's ability to adapt.

This proven ability is alive and well even as we age. With the right stimulation, your brain can form new neural pathways, alter existing connections, and adapt and react in ever changing ways.

You can utilize the natural power of the brain's neuroplasticity to increase your cognitive abilities, enhance your ability to learn new information, and improve and maintain memory. It takes the brain being stimulated physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually to keep these functions happening.

So what can you do to ensure this process continues throughout your whole life?

- ✓ Get enough sleep
- ✓ Exercise daily
- ✓ Eat brain boosting foods
- ✓ Keep stress in check
- ✓ Make time for friends and fun
- ✓ Give your brain a workout
- ✓ Laugh and promote laughter

Staying connected and engaged in your community and being involved with others is also extremely beneficial. You need motivation and a reason for being at all stages of life. Being an active participant in your life gives you cause to remember!

Another suggestion to keep your memory sharp and dynamic – become a member of the **Darien Senior Program** at our new location in Mather Center, 2 Renshaw Road. Opportunities are in abundance and laughter is in extraordinary supply!



Open House!

Monday, September 22nd

Celebrate the official Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for the **Darien Senior Program at Mather Center** at 11:30am. Lunch will follow at noon and 'A Touch of Sinatra' entertainment at 12:30pm. Open House evening hours are 7:00pm to 8:30pm. To RSVP and for more details call **203.656.7490**.

Pearls of Wisdom
Early Warning Signs of Alzheimer's

By Joan Blumenfeld, MS, LPC, Geriatric Care Manager

Before I became a care manager I was totally clueless! I attributed Mother's increasingly odd lapses to her usual flighty charm.

I didn't get it when Mom told me she was taking taxis to visit her sister downtown. I thought it was rather a good idea for someone her age to be using taxis instead of public transportation. In actuality, Mom took taxis because she was getting lost on a trip she had been making weekly for forty years. I also didn't get it when Mom stopped cooking, or sent me loving notes in a shaky handwriting I did not recognize.

I finally got it when I took Mother on a trip to North West Canada. At the elegant old hotel, Mother could not figure out how to turn on the antique faucets. She had difficulty buckling her shoes. She nearly drove me crazy zipping and unzipping her suitcase looking for things she had never packed. The "A" word – Alzheimer's – came into my mind and that's exactly what it was, a cruel, gradual terminal disease of the brain.

Mother's mental and physical decline over the next nine years was a long, slow, emotionally painful process for the whole family. It was filled with ups and downs and loving care. Once we had a name for what was wrong, we could plan more realistically and intelligently for Mother's future quality of life and care.

Ultimately Mother died peacefully two months short of her ninety-fifth birthday. I was blessed to be at her side holding her hand.

Pearl of Wisdom: Pay attention to early signs of confusion and memory loss. It could be Alzheimer's. A good evaluation is called for. While there is no cure for Alzheimer's there is much planning you can do to alleviate the chaos that comes with this chronic illness.



Remembering...Cherished Memories

By Peter F. Eder

All too frequently, our memories are clouded over with the dramatic and at times catastrophic events that may have befallen us. Our own physical or mental or financial ailments, the pain of loss or watching loved ones suffer and die. It could be a shocking unexpected occurrence or a long, painful decline. Memories like these can choke us and pull us down.



What a wonderful offsetting option it is to remember – and to recount – our cherished memories to look beyond the hurt to the happiness. Remember those joyous celebrations, good fortunes, rewarding adventures, happy accidents, and simple pleasures that brought us laughter and pride-filled occasions.

As we remember them, let us allow their memory to be a joy of strength and comfort to us. May they inspire us to a better life, to higher hopes and to a great contentment of spirit.

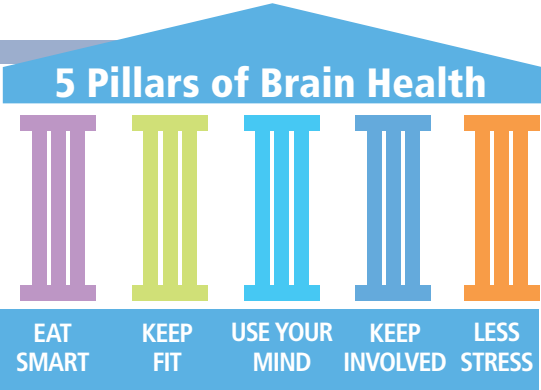


Brain Fitness

Keeping your brain fit, engaged and active now can help you maintain mental alertness in the future.

Just like a physical workout session, brain fitness exercise is just one aspect of holistic brain health, which is rooted in five pillars: eating smart, being physically fit, working your mind, socializing and stressing less. AARP Brain Fitness powered by BrainHQ offers great ways to work and engage your mind.

The exercises focus your attention, increase your brain speed, improve your memory, strengthen your people skills and sharpen your intelligence. Visit www.brain.aarp.org and try several free brain exercises. To continue the fun, a subscription fee will apply.



Keep Learning – Your Brain is a Terrible Thing to Waste

You are invited to participate in a variety of daytime non-credit courses for adults over 50. Most classes start in mid-September with the **Lifetime Learners Institute** at nearby Norwalk Community College. Courses include: *Health, Music, History, Arts, Language, Religions, Travel, Literature, Science, Culture, Genealogy, Movies, Current Events and Computers.*

All 2-hour classes meet only once per week, without tests or stress, and run from 4 to 8 weeks. Classes meet at 1 p.m. and/or 3 p.m. Monday thru Thursday. Friday classes meet at 10 a.m., followed by a guest presentation at 1 p.m. All courses cost only \$30.00, with a required 12-month \$50.00 membership. To meet interesting people and make new friends, phone **203.857.3330** and request a free detailed course catalog or visit the website: www.lifetimelearners.org



Is It Memory Loss?

By Melody Matheny Orpen, RN Community Health Coordinator, Visiting Nurse and Hospice

Memory is a pretty amazing thing. Why one person remembers everything that happened in their life and another forgets your name just after you have been introduced is part of ongoing research. Have you forgotten the name of a favorite movie star only to wake up in the middle of the night saying “Cary Grant”? People worry if it is simple forgetfulness or something more serious.

While Alzheimer’s disease seems to always be in the news, all memory loss is not Alzheimer’s. Memory loss can have a physical cause (side effect of medication, B12 deficiency, alcohol/drug related, repeated concussions or sustained hypoxia), an emotional cause (anxiety, depression, stress) or a combination of physical/emotional causes. A complete medical exam which includes a thorough family history, review of all medications, blood work and tests (CAT scans or MRI) and a consultation with a specialist will help the doctor make a diagnosis and prescribe treatment to resolve the problem, reduce symptoms or delay progression of disease.

The following strategies may help in coping with memory loss in yourself or a loved one:

- 1** Trying to place blame for memory loss will not help you cope. It isn’t anybody’s fault.

2 Work with your doctor to get an accurate diagnosis and develop a treatment plan. Keep your own records. Note symptoms, what happens at doctor appointments and effect of treatment.

3 Use lists and notes, label items and follow a structured routine to aid memory.

4 Redirection and distraction will help to refocus attention and defuse tense situations. Use short phrases for directions. Eliminate choice. “It is time for dinner.” “We are going for a walk now.”

5 It is alright to tell a white lie. Pretending to drop by the doctor on your way to the market is okay.

6 Don’t remind them of sad times or events – it just makes the event fresh for them.
- 7** Not sleeping at night? Eliminate caffeine, don’t exercise just before bedtime or watch stressful television programs. There is nothing wrong with getting a sitter/caregiver at night so you can sleep.

8 You can’t do it all on your own. If you have family members or friends who offer to help, let them. Make a list of things they can do and let them do it.

9 Caregivers get worn down by stress and the strain of physical care. Take care of yourself. Keep up with your own appointments, rest, exercise, eat well, stay hydrated and take time off for non-caregiving activities. Spiritual and emotional support is important as well.

10 Take care of business – advance directives, finances and funeral arrangements. Plan ahead for a change in living situation.

11 Treasure the moments of clarity. Keep photos and cherished items around. Write down family stories and share them.

If you are concerned about a family member, contact **Visiting Nurse and Hospice of Fairfield County**. Call **203.762.8958**, and the staff will listen to your story, make a home visit and offer specific information to help your situation.

Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha Ha

A Little Laughter Can Improve Memory

A recent study conducted by researchers at Loma Linda University in California suggests that laughter can improve short-term memory in older adults. Elderly test subjects who watched a funny 20-minute video performed better on all measures of a memory test immediately following the experiment and had lower levels of the stress hormone cortisol, which is known to negatively impact neurons in the brain.

Just for Laughs...

A few older couples were together chatting, and one of the men, Harry, started talking about this fantastic restaurant he went to the other night with his wife. “Really?” one of the men said, “What’s it called?” After thinking for a few seconds Harry said, “What is that good smelling flower called again?” “Do you mean a rose?” the other man questioned. “Yes, that’s it!” he exclaimed. Looking over at his wife he said, “Rose, what’s that restaurant we went to the other night?”

A Helpful Resource on Memory Loss

A resource regarding memory entitled **Understanding Memory Loss — What To Do When You Have Trouble Remembering** is available from the National Institute on Aging (visit the website www.nia.nih.gov) or call **1.800.438.4380** (the Alzheimer’s Disease Education and Referral Center) to obtain a copy of this free booklet.

Mental Exercise for Memory Improvement

Even if your physical condition no longer permits you to get around as easily as you once did, there’s no reason your mind can’t stay as strong and sharp as ever. All it takes is regular practice. So instead of sitting down in front of the television, consider putting your mind to work on one or more of the following brain-building activities:

Read a book.

Choose a genre or topic that interests you but falls outside of your usual reading patterns and comfort zones. Studies show that by learning new things, we strengthen different areas of the brain and create new connections that improve memory function.



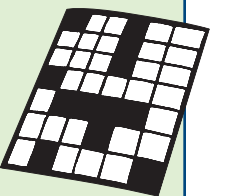
Put together a jigsaw puzzle.

Take one good long look at the picture on the front of the box and hold onto it. Now hide the box away somewhere you won’t be tempted to look at it again. Try to reconstruct the pieces of the puzzle without going back to the original picture for reference. This puts your memory to the test and sharpens your overall mental processes.



Work on a crossword or sudoku.

Puzzles like these require you to make new associations between words while reinforcing old patterns. This exercises your memory and stimulates your cognitive processes.



Play cards with a friend.

Not only do cards and other games help strengthen your memory and analytical abilities, they are also inherently social activities that provide encouragement and enjoyment.



At Home In Darien provides the following services for free to all Darien residents age 60+:

-  **Transportation within Darien, Stamford, Norwalk and New Canaan, Monday - Friday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.**
-  **Telephone referral, advice and counsel.**
-  **Communication and Programs —**
Out and About newsletter.

Monthly email blasts promoting events and services.

Social and educational programs throughout the town.
-  **Handy Services —**
Volunteers including Friendly Visitors, Shoppers, Helpers and Drivers along with seasonal services such as snow shoveling and leaf raking.

Referrals to discounted vetted service providers such as:

Appliance Repair
Computer Services
Electricians
Hairdressers
Handymen
Landscapers
Plumbers
Repairmen
Small Chores
and more!

Aerobic Exercise for Memory Improvement

We all forget things from time to time and it's perfectly normal. However, as we age, the frequency of such memory lapses tends to increase. All too often, we resign ourselves to this, assuming it to be a natural and inevitable part of the aging process. This is simply not the case!

If you or a loved one have noticed an increase in such lapses, there are things you can do to reverse the process and preserve your memory for many years to come.

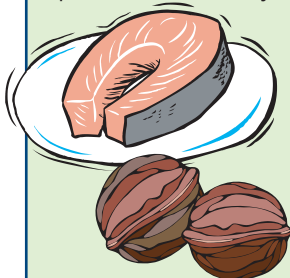
To improve memory: get plenty of regular aerobic exercise. Don't worry...you don't have to run a marathon, walking is an effective, no expense, fun exercise. Recent studies of adults between the ages of 60 and 80 indicate that just 40 minutes of walking (about 3 miles) 3 times per week improves short-term recall capabilities significantly. The key, it seems, is walking fast and far enough to reach the threshold of aerobic exercise, which is generally considered to be 70 percent of one's maximum heart rate.



Nutrition for Memory Improvement

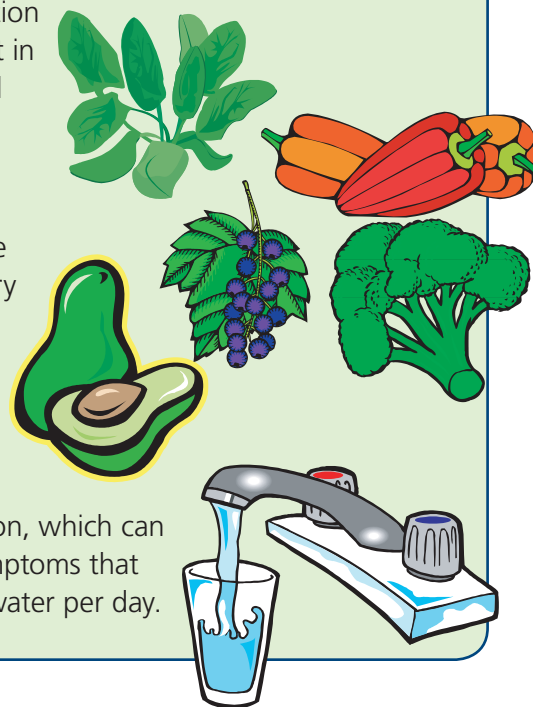
Maintaining your memory depends in no small part on staying strong and healthy. A healthy diet can have enormous, positive effects.

As we grow older, our bodies undergo a number of physical changes that, left unchecked, can dramatically affect our mental functions. Nutritional absorption rates, for example, naturally decline with age. This can result in vital deficiencies in vitamin B12, which protects neurons and promotes healthy brain function.



Numerous studies indicate that foods rich in omega-3 fats (such as salmon, tuna, trout, walnuts and flaxseed) have a significant positive impact on memory and brain function. What's more, the antioxidants found in abundance in fresh produce literally keep your brain cells from "rusting."

In addition to eating healthy, hydration is also important. Older adults are significantly more susceptible to dehydration, which can result in confusion, drowsiness, memory loss and other symptoms that resemble dementia. So, make sure to drink 6-8 glasses of water per day.



Catch the Wave!

**The Darien High School Football Team
invites YOU to become a Blue Wave Football Fan!**

Please join the parents & fans as they cheer the team on during the 2014 football season. Admission is free to those age 65 and over.

We hope to see you at the games!
2014 DHS Football Captains & Team

Home Game Schedule:

Saturday 9/27 @ 1:30pm vs Bassick
Thursday 10/2 @ 2:30pm vs St Joseph
Saturday 10/11 @ 2:00pm vs Fairfield Warde
Saturday 11/8 @ 2:00pm vs Harding
Saturday 11/15 @ 1:00pm vs North Haven
Thursday 11/27 @ 10:30am "Turkey Bowl"
vs New Canaan

**Need help
with leaf raking
this fall or
shoveling snow
from your public
sidewalk this
winter?**
**Please call At
Home In Darien
at 203.655.2227
for details.**



Thanks for your Support!

At Home In Darien is supported by hundreds of people from all over the town of Darien. Are you one of them? We depend on your support to continue to serve Darien's senior citizens. We are a private, tax-exempt, non-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

Please send a generous gift today to:
At Home In Darien,
P.O. Box 1242, Darien, CT 06820.

Thank you.

**Make sure you know what's going
on around town...subscribe to our
monthly email blast!**

Email Sandi@AtHomeInDarien.org
or call **203.655.2227**
to request to receive it by mail.

**Here's just one of the dozens of listings
for September!**

**Health Fair at Mather Center,
Darien Town Hall**

**Saturday, September 27, 2014
from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.**

Health Screenings, Useful Wellness Information
and Flu Shots

Sponsored by: Darien Health Department

For more information, please visit the website
www.darienhealth.com