

**Institute for Disability Studies**  
**ShareCare Notes – Understanding Alzheimer’s: Children Have Questions Too**  
**March 9, 2007**

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**1. Don’t Forget the Kids...**

When caring a family member with Alzheimer’s we often forget that our children and teens may not understand what is happening. They may feel concerned, forgotten, or scared. So it is important for us to take time to talk to them, validate their concerns, and help demystify the process of what is happening to their loved one. The Mayo Clinic addresses some of these issues in an article on how to respond to kids questions about Alzheimer’s disease. They highlight the importance of answering questions honestly and staying involved in family activities. The Alzheimer’s Association also gives a list of ways to help children and teens cope and activities that can be done as a family. To view these sources please visit

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/alzheimers/HQ00216>

<http://www.alz.org/Care/Coping/childrenteens.asp>

**3. For What You Don’t Know...**

For some kids, talking to them might not be enough. The Alzheimer’s Association has some worksheets for younger children which will explain what it is like to have the disease. They have activities such as unscramble the words, a maze and how to make a memory box. This Web site also offers a great resource of fiction and non-fiction books for preschool and grade school children. For older children who might want to know about the specifics of how Alzheimer’s affects the brain, the faculty at Washington University put together a Web site on Neuroscience for Kids: Alzheimer’s Disease. This site tells what Alzheimer’s is, who it affects, the symptoms, therapies, and how to protect your brain. Lastly, a teacher and consultant on Alzheimer’s disease discusses her experience talking to 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders about the disease. Having nurses, social workers, and counselors talk to grade school children about this disease could be a very good opportunity and rich educational experience. To learn more about these resources, please visit the following sites:

[http://www.alz.org/living\\_with\\_alzheimers\\_just\\_for\\_kids\\_and\\_teens.asp](http://www.alz.org/living_with_alzheimers_just_for_kids_and_teens.asp)

<http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/alz.html>

[http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m1053/is\\_n4\\_v18/ai\\_8001207](http://www.findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1053/is_n4_v18/ai_8001207)

**3. Incorporating Everyone**

As you're loved one progresses through the stages of Alzheimer's, it is important to keep you children and teens engaged with him or her. The Alzheimer's Association has put together a list of 101 Ways to Spend Time with a Person with Alzheimer's Disease, but many of the activities on this list can be generalized to people with other disabilities as well. The list includes activities such as plant seeds indoors and outdoors, cut pictures out of greeting cards or magazines, string Cheerios to hang outside for birds, write a letter to a friend or family member, interview the person about his or her life using either a video camera or cassette recorder, and ask your loved one about his or her favorite memories. To find a full copy of this list, visit [http://www.alz.org/resources/kidsandteens/kidsteens\\_101.asp](http://www.alz.org/resources/kidsandteens/kidsteens_101.asp)

#### **4. Upcoming Events**

March 13 – ShareCare Recovery Connection will have a group meeting at 6 p.m. at Westminster Presbyterian Church. This group is open to anyone over 50 years of age who has been affected by Hurricane Katrina.

March 15 – Potluck! Bring your friends, family, and favorite dish. We would love to be able to talk with you more about ShareCare and have you meet some of our members. Potluck is open to anyone and is held at 6 p.m. at Westminster Presbyterian Church. For more information on either of these events, please call Christy Harrison at 601.266.5163.