

Published June 18th, 2014

## No, She Doesn't Have Alzheimer's Disease

By Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC



Linda Fodrini-Johnson is the founder and executive director of Eldercare Services, a licensed marriage, family and child counselor, and a certified care manager. For information about Eldercare Services, visit [www.EldercareAnswers.com](http://www.EldercareAnswers.com) or call (925) 937-2018.

is often not welcomed by the others.

These families end up in court battles and risk having governmental agencies stepping in, appointing court conservators to care for the individual. But, more important is the negative consequences of their behavior, bickering and disagreement on the elder who is now very sensitive to emotional environments and can become anxious while acting out behaviors that ignite more family discord. This type of family gets into a cyclone of stress and the elder is often the one who suffers the most.

Each family member can retain their separate relationship with Mom or Dad, but this is the family that is most in need of an objective professional to coordinate the care, make recommendations, mediate differences and keep the stress to a minimum for the parent with Alzheimer's disease. The professional can also find important roles for each adult child to keep enjoying with the affected parent. Even if siblings disagree with one another they have a right to a relationship with the parent as long as stress and anxiety is eliminated for the aging parent.

Learn the Tools Needed to Communicate at Free Class

Linda Fodrini-Johnson will be offering a free public educational class on Tuesday, Aug. 12 at 5:30 p.m. in the Eldercare Services office (1808 Tice Valley Blvd., Walnut Creek) called "Dementia:

"It can't be true, this must be a mistake." ... "Not my mom; she is a retired doctor - she is bright and accomplished."

It is often a shock for families to hear and accept a diagnosis when no known cure exists for a disease and the prognosis is many years of steady decline. We who hold our parents in high esteem find it most challenging to witness the loss of their capacity for choice, self-care and self-determination. However, this is a diagnosis that affects the entire family and being prepared will be the key to healthy caregiving and reduced caregiver burden.

Families will often try to work as a team to protect the parent's dignity and support one another during this sometimes very long journey. It's best when families work together and take a class, and/or join a support group. It's even better to have a consultation with a Professional Geriatric Care Manager ([www.CareManager.org](http://www.CareManager.org)) or ([www.EldercareAnswers.com](http://www.EldercareAnswers.com)) very early in the process - if for nothing more than to learn to ask the right questions, to gather the resources and entitlements and understand how to weigh each decision carefully.

Family members may be in conflict when all of the children are focused in different directions. Outcomes or solutions on what is best for Mom or Dad become murky because of long-standing unresolved issues, family conflicts or the relationship with the parent who is affected by the dementia. Each adult child is the "expert" and this

Families at a Crossroad between Safety and Respect." She will discuss how to communicate with someone who has dementia and how (depending on the dementia) the communication might need to differ. The class will also cover:

- 1) Tools on how to have conversations about needs when denial is present;
- 2) Understanding the different types of dementias;
- 3) Giving you permission to "stretch the truth" for dignity, safety and self-esteem.

If you are interested in attending this class, register soon as seating is limited, by calling (925) 937-2018 or visit [www.EldercareAnswers.com](http://www.EldercareAnswers.com).

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA