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# My spouse was diagnosed with MCI – now what?

By Linda Fodrini-Johnson

MCI is the acronym for Mild Cognitive Impairment. It does not mean “Dementia” at this stage. A large percentage of those with this diagnosis never progress further than short-term memory loss. Research has shown with lifestyle changes, improvements in cognition are possible. However, any new diagnoses often come with stress and worry about the future. Many individuals think they have a dementia like Alzheimer’s disease, but that is not the case at this point of the journey. It can progress to a dementia and further testing will determine the type of dementia someone might have.

Worry and stress are negatives for a healthy brain. It is imperative to take this as an opportunity to make some lifestyle changes that could keep the brain healthy and possibly arrest the progression.

This is an important time for couples not to put their “heads in the sand” as the saying goes but to take action and do some practical planning – that will be helpful for whatever the future holds.

**1) Share responsibilities of running a**

**household.** Traditionally we all have our roles in our relationships but with this diagnosis it is a time to share how to run the household, which includes, finances, medications, taking care of the garden or pets, even how to cook some simple meals and more.

**2) Legal documents.** It is always good to update your Trust or Advance Health Directives. It is very important if the person with MCI is the only other decision maker that you add additional decision makers, not only the well spouse, but for the spouse with MCI.

**3) Learn as much as you can about the “Healthy Brain” and MCI.** If you have dementia in your family, you might want to have genetic testing to see if it is even more important for you to make these changes. Changing lifestyles is not easy but after about six weeks, it will become the new routine.

**4) Lifestyle changes:**  
**a)** Positive attitudes toward aging have a great impact on the brain. The American Medical Association’s research last year found that even those with a genetic link to dementia and had a

positive outlook toward aging were able to reverse their MCI diagnosis. So, if you think “aging is the pits,” that is not going to help you. A positive outlook on aging includes looking at this stage of life as an opportunity to give back, travel, learn new skills and enjoy each day.

**b)** Diet – the best diet to follow is the Mediterranean Diet. An important food item for the brain is the healthy fats, such as salmon, olive oil, avocados and walnuts. Avoid processed foods and eat whole foods.

**c)** Exercise – try for 30 minutes a day. Add some resistance, weight training and balance work to your routine. Join a class and make it fun, walk with a friend or your partner. Look for the “Awe” in every day.

**d)** Social Engagement. This is not just for your brain health but it adds years to your life. Be a part of a group that meets regularly. Examples; senior centers, libraries, Rotary or other service organizations, the Lamorinda Village www.lamorindavillage.org. Continue to be in touch with family and friends but add more to the calendar. Volunteer-

ing just about anywhere is both good for your health and another way to stay socially engaged.

**e)** Learning new skills and playing brain games is a boost to brain health.

**f)** Sleep. Work on getting 7-8 hours of sleep each night without medications. During sleep is when memory processing is working.

**g)** Mindfulness: Find some time each day to just “be” – quiet the mind. Listen to music, sit in a garden, even coloring with markers or doing another art project can be a way to lose yourself and empty the mind. One can use yoga, prayer, meditation recordings or apps on your phone like Calm.

The above lifestyle

changes are going to benefit both the spouse with MCI and the care partner. Stress is part of life but when you focus on the positives, it becomes manageable and allows for joy.

I taught two sessions for couples this past year and plan on teaching another late this fall at Lafayette Orinda Presbyterian Church. These sessions are three weeks and are for couples. If you are interested, email me at LindaFJ620@outlook.com.

I will be teaching a free Zoom class, “Dementia: Road Map from Diagnosis to Family Care,” at 11 a.m. March 8. If interested enroll on my website: www.LindaFodriniJohnson.com.



Linda Fodrini-Johnson, MA, MFT, CMC, is a Licensed Family Therapist and Certified Care Manager. She has been practicing professional care management since 1984. Linda founded Eldercare Services, a full-service care management and home care company in 1989. Eldercare Services is now a division of Home Care Assistance and continues to provide Bay Area families with care management, advocacy, counseling, support groups and education.

## Lafayette Housing Element and Res Tower

... continued from Page 2

Srivatsa also provided information about the Lafayette Reservoir Tower Seismic Retrofit project. A proposed design for the required retrofit included a tower shortened by 40 feet and received comments of concern from residents and members of the council. Srivatsa said the reaction indicated high levels of concern to EBMUD’s plan that would reduce the tower, leaving “only a truncated remnant of the iconic structure.”

A committee of

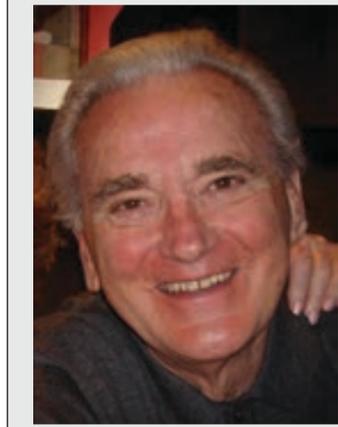
highly qualified residents with expertise in seismic structural retrofit design, structural engineering, architecture, and construction volunteered to review EBMUD’s plans. Over a period of nine months, the committee studied the project’s technical reports, analyses, plans, and references cited by EBMUD’s structural design consultant (AECOM) and the Division of Safety of Dams (DSOD) to determine if the existing scale of the tower could be retained while still ensuring safety for Lafayette residents and visitors.

A revised plan which concluded the tower could remain at the same height, requiring only a modest addition of mild steel reinforcement in the upper half of the tower, was submitted to EBMUD. Srivatsa told council she will make sure the committee’s report “finds a home” on the city website where council and members of the public can review the plans and find updates.

Finally, Srivatsa said city staff are meeting with Caltrans the first week in March to discuss the El Curtola Bridge situation.

## In Memory

### Dick Macy Resident of Moraga



Ernest Richard (Dick) Macy, a remarkable and cherished individual, has left an indelible mark on the lives of those who were fortunate enough to know him. He passed away surrounded by the love of his family on January 30, 2024.

Dick was a devoted husband, celebrating 70 years of marriage with his beloved wife, Jean Macy. Together, they exemplified unwavering commitment and deep affection. As a father, Dick was unparalleled, nurturing and guiding his children with wisdom and love. He leaves behind a legacy of love to his children: Kim Macy Richardson, Eric Macy, and Jennifer Conley. He was not just a father but a pillar of strength and support, instilling in his children values that will endure through generations.

To his grandchildren, Brittany and Amanda Richardson, Eric Jr., Brooke, and Hunter Macy, he was affectionately known as ‘Papa’. His playful spirit and boundless love enriched their lives and created cherished memories that will be forever treasured.

Dick earned his undergraduate degree from UCLA (Kim and Eric followed in his footsteps) and his MBA from USC, all while working to support his young family. The majority of his career was spent at IBM, where he spearheaded major projects and built highly effective teams. Upon taking early retirement, he joined Digital Equipment where he handled major domestic and international accounts.

Dick’s faith was the cornerstone of his life, and he was an active member of Moraga Valley Presbyterian Church for many years. He served in various capacities, from elder to mentor, leaving an indelible mark on the community. His dedication extended to supporting Mount Hermon in Santa Cruz, where his participation was deeply valued.

Beyond his spiritual and familial commitments, Dick was an adventurer at heart. He found joy in sailing, whether on larger boats or navigating the waters on his Hobie Cat catamaran, where he fearlessly rode the waves of both San Francisco Bay and Lake Tahoe. His zest for life extended to other activities, including travel, horseback riding, bike riding, and motorcycle riding. He was also a master of leisure, enjoying games like Monopoly, Gin, and Ping Pong.

However, above all else, Dick cherished moments spent with Jean, his beloved wife and companion for 75 years. Their enduring love story is a testament to the power of love and companionship.

Though Dick has departed from this world, his spirit will forever live on in the hearts of those he touched. His kindness, laughter, and unwavering love will be dearly missed but fondly remembered for years to come. May his legacy of love and joy continue to inspire and guide us all. Please join us in remembering and honoring the extraordinary life of Ernest Richard (Dick) Macy.

## Share Your Celebrations and Remembrances

If you would like to share an announcement about a special event or achievement, such as a wedding, engagement, scholarship or graduation of a local resident, or about a special person from Lamorinda who has passed, send a photo along with your text (up to 200 words) to story-desk@lamorindaweekly.com, and include “Celebrations or Remembrances” in the subject line.

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