Alzheimer's Disease — Mealtime Interventions

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**Audiovisual Reviews**

Andrea Nevins, MPH, Audiovisual Editor


*Encounters with Grief* presents the stories of three grieving people: a mother whose teenage son died suddenly, a man whose wife died over a six-month period, and a woman whose husband died suddenly. Their honest feelings and emotions are laid out with a directness that draws the viewer into the overpowering sense of sadness that permeates these accounts. The stories are intertwined, presenting a composite picture of the grief process that is very real and compelling.

Even though the video is short, the content is rich and rewarding for the viewer. The people profiled present the reality of their experience of grieving. Here is grief in all its confusion, loneliness, and pain. The viewer is given a window into the grieving process which is, indeed, intensely painful but not without hope. All three people talk about their gradual return to normal living, albeit as people forever changed by grief—but able to go on and face life again.

A woman suddenly widowed in her sixties describes the sense of “total numbness” and being “without feelings” because “a light had gone out” in her life. A man, whose wife had died at age fifty-two had overpowering feelings of depression and how unprepared he was to cope with this experience. The woman whose son had died suddenly spoke of how isolated she felt and how pain was always “underlying her feelings.” There is a strong theme here of how unprepared they were for the loss of their loved ones. There is no real preparation for devastation.

The importance of having someone to talk with, besides family members, was stressed by the persons profiled here. They needed someone to help them see that what they were experiencing was normal, they weren’t crazy, and there was hope for a return to life again.

What this video provides is a strong, well presented picture of the way in which three people experienced a profound loss. Their examples give the viewer a sense of the uniqueness of the normal process of grieving and also the many commonalities of that process.

This video would be an excellent adjunct for a class on death and dying and would be appropriate for both high school and college students. There would also be a value in viewing this video for persons going through counseling, members of grief groups, or individuals experiencing their own grief.

There is no substitute for a consideration of the experiences of real people, who can become “mentors” for others facing similar experiences.

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Alzheimer’s Disease — Mealtime Interventions is subtitled “Dealing with Problem Mealtime Behaviors” and is intended to be used as part of a two-to seven-hour training program that increases the skills of long-term care dining room staff who care for residents with Alzheimer’s disease. The videocassette demonstrates the most common eating behavior problems found among these residents and shows how they can be resolved.

Four vignettes, set in a long-term care facility dining room, highlight mealtime problems such as staring, inappropriate use of utensils, and taking food from other residents. Problems related to having too many food items on a tray and large portions of food are also presented. Each vignette depicts a problem situation, then has a pause to discuss the problems and possible solutions, followed by a depiction of appropriate staff response. A very brief discussion follows the vignettes about the important role of staff in the nutritional management of the residents.

This videocassette provides basic information regarding eating problems that a new staff member is likely to encounter, offers opportunity for discussion and note-taking, and would be appropriate as an orientation piece. Wandering and pacing are not depicted. The videocassette was not designed and cannot be used as a standalone piece. The accompanying manual provides more complete material on identifying and resolving mealtime problems for both nurses and assistants. The main weakness of the manual and videocassette is that they purport to address nutritional management and malnutrition risk, but do so only from the aspect of meals. An interdisciplinary care planning approach to malnutrition risk assessment, and how this can be included as a component of a quality monitoring program, is not included.

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View From the Inside: Older Adults, ½” videocassette/21 min/color/1995. Producer and distributor, Sandra Martin Productions, 12147 Franklin Circle, Omaha, NE 68154. 402/445-8447. Sale $175, no rental.

This video is an upbeat presentation of relatively healthy, self-motivated, happy, independent adults who appear successful in their adaptation to “getting older.”

Diane Martin