

Family Caregiving: A New Point of View



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Life Re-Calculating

- Relationships drift apart
- Health stability can decline
- Financial insecurity is a risk
- Independence can be compromised
- 70 is *Not* the New 50 !

The Privacy Challenge

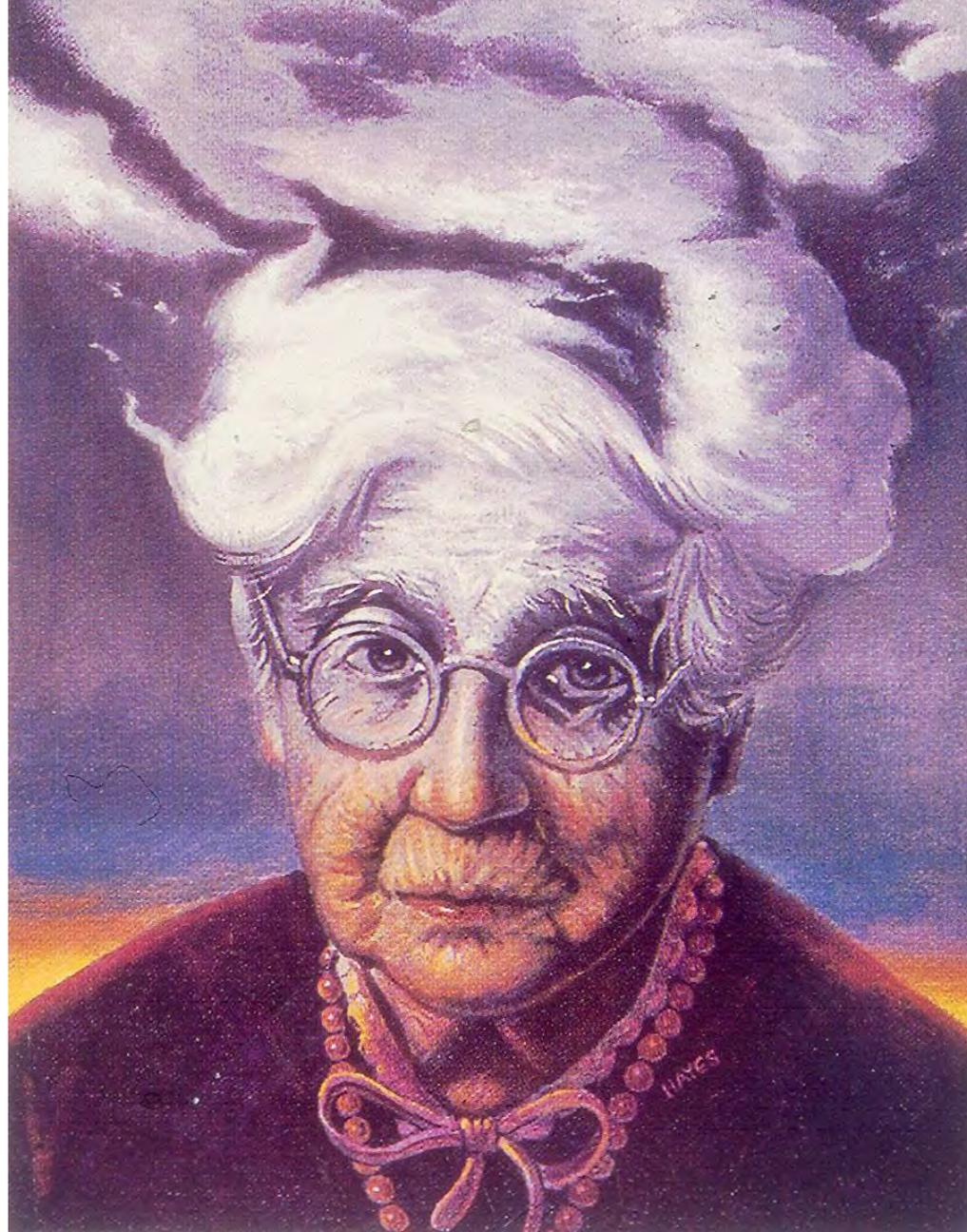
- Everyone needs personal space and private time. Retirement + health problems infringe on both...
 - “married him for better or worse, but not for lunch”
- Hands-on caregiving can erode intimacy



Challenge of Mood Disorders

- Apathy – easy to recognize, difficult to treat
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Dementia
- Delirium





Dementia

- Gradual onset, never abrupt
- Defined by memory deficit plus one other significant cognitive problem. Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia.
- Early signs may include loss of abstract thinking or executive function skills.
- Dementia shortens life expectancy and can be devastating to relationships.

Sources of Confusion

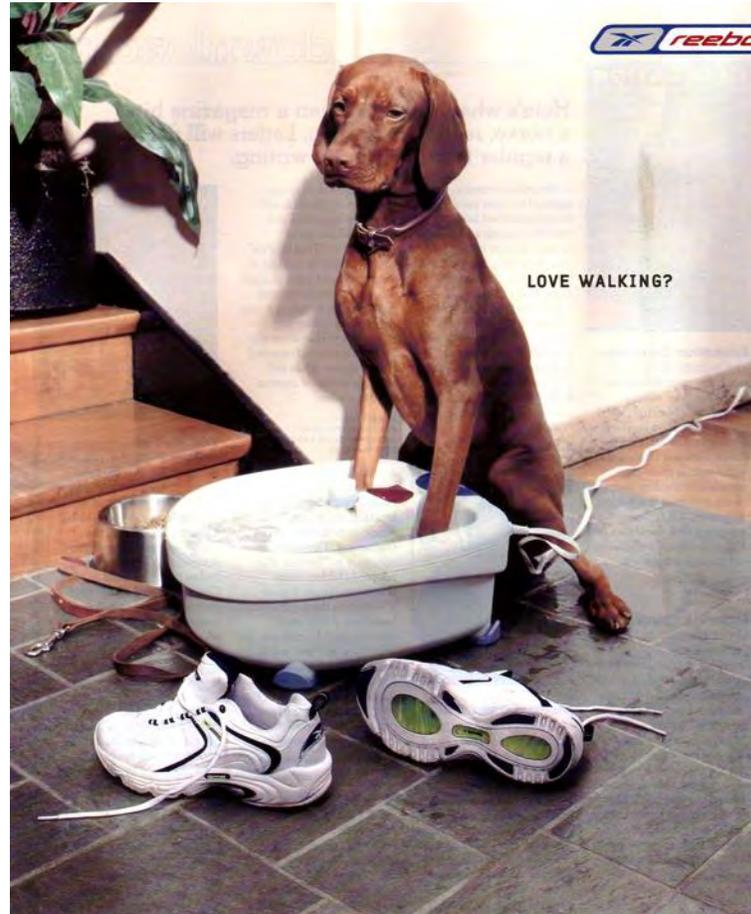
- Medication side effect – reversible?
- Depression – treatable?
- PD-related
 - > 60% of patients have some level of cognitive impairment
- Concurrent neurological disease
 - Multi-infarct dementia (vascular, strokes)
 - Lewy body dementia
 - Alzheimer's disease

Behavioral Approaches to Dementia

- Simplify communication and complex sequences.
- **DO NOT ARGUE !**
- Reinforce desired behaviors every time.
- Anticipate physical needs.
- Incorporate music, rhythm, repetitive motion and high-touch strategies into daily activity plan.
- Keep daily schedule predictable.
- Modify environment to minimize disorientation

Delirium





Choose Better Health

- Water !
- Nutrition & supplements
- Exercise is cheap therapy
- Rx diligence (yours, not your PWP)
- Immunizations
- Mammogram, colonoscopy
- Dental

Meeting the Energy Challenge



24/7 is not a care plan.

Beware of any job bigger than the worker.

Sleep deprivation is dangerous!

Challenge of Caregiver Fatigue

- Keep your job description updated; widen your circle of support.
- Respite is more important than recreation.
- Cocktail hour is not a strategy.
- Consider separate sleeping quarters.
- **Are you saving for a rainy day when *it's pouring outside?***

Choose Planned Time Out

- You need time away from being the 24/7 caregiver
- Learn to enjoy time alone
 - 1 hour per day
 - 1 day per week
 - 1 weekend quarterly



Alternatives to Home Care*

- Independent Retirement Communities
- Assisted Living – sometimes promise more than they can deliver
- Memory Care Assisted Living
- Skilled Nursing care centers
- Palliative care / hospice options

* **The pivotal challenge in caregiving decisions is that the person's *perception* of (dis)ability has not caught up to his or her *actual* frailty.**