

The Family Caregiver

Newsletter of the Lewis-Mason-Thurston Family Caregiver Support Program

Spring 2018

Spring greetings family caregivers!

We are welcoming spring with a technology theme. We have been reminded that each technology breakthrough can have many applications. Who knew when GPS was invented for military navigation, that it would eventually be placed into insoles of someone's shoes with memory loss to help locate them?

We are curious how you might use the examples in our caregiving tech toolbox. Feel free to let us know your favorite caregiving technology. Enjoy!

-The Family Caregiver Support Program Team

Technology: It has been moving at an even faster pace over the last 25 to 30 years, and even faster recently since most of us now carry a very powerful computer in our pockets. What does this have to do with the care of your family member with a rapidly declining mind and body? It means that there are more and more tools to add to your toolbox to maximize dignity, safety, and enjoyment in their lives and provide you with peace of mind.

The technology can vary from the simple non-electronic items, like sticky labels, or modified utensils, to strategically using Voice Assistants, GPS and Smart Phones. In this article we will try to give you a very broad overview of what is out there so you can start to think about how to use these items to your advantage (or when not to!).

Not everything that is out there is useful. A lot of what's called "assistive technology" either isn't geared to someone with memory loss or will only be useful in the earlier times when someone is still able to follow routine and direction. Configuring these devices for maximum effectiveness can be a lot of trial and error and many devices may not be useful. Some of them require recharging, which can be difficult for a caregiver to remember to do. It is important to keep in mind that we seek the right tool, for the right need, for the right person, for the right time. Occupational Therapists can be a great help in figuring this all out.



The advance of technology is based on making it fit in so that you don't really even notice it, so it's part of everyday life.

-Bill Gates

CAREGIVER TECH SUPPORT

Examples of Assistive technology that may be useful for persons with dementia:

- Motion Sensor Lights and light switches are a great way to get a warning when a family member is up and moving. They can be as simple as night lights or sensors can be added to existing traditional lamps or built-in light bulb sockets.

First Alert Motion Sensing Light Socket, \$12.73:

<https://www.amazon.com/First-Alert-PIR725-Sensing-Activated/dp/B003QKS4Z4/>



GE Ultra Brite Motion-Activated LED Light, 40 Lumens, Soft White, Night Light \$7.79:

<https://www.amazon.com/GE-Motion-Activated-Efficient-Hallway-29844/dp/B015Z9W7RE/>

- Eatwell Brand dining set to aid feeding oneself as dexterity declines and confusion increases. The shape and colors help people with Dementia see their food better and feed themselves easier.

Eatwell Dining Set \$98:

<https://www.eatwellset.com/product-page/copy-of-8-piece-eatwell-assistive-tableware-set>



- Cellular connected pill boxes that light up to let a family member know when to take medication, and it texts the care provider that their daily dose has been taken.



Medminder, starts at flat \$39.99 per month, no upfront cost:

<https://www.medminder.com/>

- A set of jingle bells on an exit to warn when the door is opened or using sticky labels to help identify household items are assistive technology!

Technology is nothing. What's important is that you have a faith in people, that they're basically good and smart, and if you give them tools, they'll do wonderful things with them.

-Steve Jobs

TECHNOLOGY TOOLBOX

GPS is a whole category unto itself. For someone early in their disease, features of current smartphones like “Find My Friends” location sharing might be adequate to aid in keeping track of them. For someone farther along, there are dedicated GPS tracking devices for the family member to wear. If necessary, they can even be hidden in a pendant, watch, or even shoe insoles. “Geo-Fencing” allows a caregiver to get an alert if someone strays too far outside a preset area. This is a feature built into today’s smart phones but can also be integrated into dementia-specific GPS devices.

GPS SmartSole: \$299 plus 24.95 per month for monitoring/data plan.



<http://gpssmartsole.com/gpssmartsole/pricing/>

Aspenta GPS Personal Emergency Safety Watch: \$129.00 plus 29.95 per month for service.

<http://aspenta.com/aspenta-product/mx-locare>



Video monitoring can also be valuable. Devices like Nest Cam can be used to alert someone when motion is detected and stream a live video feed to your smartphone or computer, along with recording the activity of the day. It can be a great resource if you are caring for someone with dementia but don’t live in the same dwelling. The Ring Video Doorbell is another video device to replace your door bell and can allow an exhausted caregiver to answer the door without getting up, via their smart phone.

Nest Cam: \$172.40 (Cloud video recording is an optional \$5 per month add-on)



<https://www.amazon.com/Nest-Security-Camera-Matters-Anywhere/dp/BooWBJGUA2/>

Ring Video Doorbell: \$134

<https://www.amazon.com/Ring-Wi-Fi-Enabled-Doorbell-Nickel/dp/BooN2ZDXW2/>



TECHNOLOGY TOOLBOX

Devices like Amazon's Echo or Google's Home can be configured to give reminders, set alarms, make lists, instantly play any song requested or call someone for help. Just place them throughout your home wherever there is WiFi. They require no hand dexterity to operate, since they are entirely voice driven.

Certain devices, like the Amazon Echo Show, can start instant video chats with family members by just asking it to "drop in on Annie." The best part is these devices don't get tired or frustrated! The worst part is they still require a certain level of cognition to use, and in some cases can unpleasantly surprise people who are not expecting a disembodied voice giving them reminders.

These "Voice Assistants" can also make phone calls and, in the case of the Amazon Echo with the Amazon Connect add-on, it can also make calls directly from your home land line, including 911.



Google Home: Starts at 49.95 (no service fees)

https://store.google.com/us/product/google_home_mini?hl=en-US

Amazon Echo: Starts at 39.99 (no service fees)

https://www.amazon.com/dp/B01DFKC2SO/ref=fs_ods_fs_aucc_bt



Amazon Echo Connect: 34.99 (No service fees. For connecting the Echo to a land line phone and using 911)

<https://www.amazon.com/Echo-Connect-requires-service-smartphone/dp/B076ZRF6Y>

We do want to acknowledge that these devices aren't for everyone. Assistive technology should not be used simply as an easy way for a caregiver to monitor a person with dementia without their consent or interests being considered. Nor should it be seen as a replacement for the human interaction that caregiver, friends and relatives provide. It is important to remember that these are tools and you need to use the right tool for the right situation.

Great resources for more information:

- Alzheimer's Society (UK) Assistive Technology support
https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/info/20030/staying_independent/30/assistive_technology
- Family Caregiver Alliance
<https://www.caregiver.org/assistive-technology>
- Mashable: 6 simple gadgets improving life for those with dementia
<https://mashable.com/2015/11/24/alzheimers-dementia-tech/#A2.PzXowNEqp>
- Tracking apps keep tabs on friends, kids, grandparents and pets
<http://www.startribune.com/tracking-apps-keep-tabs-on-friends-kids-grandparents-and-pets/250245711/>
- Researchers Create 'Alexa-Like' Assistant to Help Alzheimer's Patients
<https://www.healthline.com/health-news/alexa-like-assistant-to-help-alzheimers-patients#1>

UPCOMING CLASSES & EVENTS

This two-part series will run on April 17th & April 24th from 1-3:30 PM
Attendance for both classes is encouraged.
Pre-registration is suggested.



Dementia Skills Class featuring videos edited from Teepa Snow's presentation at our annual Fall Workshop in 2015

For information, registration or accommodation please call (360) 664-3162 ext. 102, or register online at www.LMTAAA.org



Annual Conference- Friday, May 18, 2018

For more information or to register, please visit: www.SouthSoundAlzheimersCouncil.org

Advance Care Planning Workshop

Learn more about Advance Care Planning & begin an Advance Care Plan.

Plus, Advance Care Plan Q & A!

Tuesday, June 26, 1-3 PM
in the LMT Olympia office conference room.



For information, registration or accommodation please call (360) 664-3162 ext. 102, or register online at www.LMTAAA.org



"Come with questions, leave with answers."

This is the place to better understand the brain and how to be a more skilled caregiver.

If you have joined us in the past, thank you for your questions. If you are attending now, we are glad to have you. If you are thinking of attending, just come.

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|--------------|---|---------------------|
| In SHELTON: | Second Wednesday of the month from 1-3 PM | (360) 427-2226 x102 |
| In CHEHALIS: | Second Thursday of the month from 1-3 PM | (360) 748-2524 x102 |
| In OLYMPIA: | Third Thursday of the month from 1-3 PM | (360) 664-3162 x102 |



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For an online copy of this newsletter please visit our website at www.LMTAAA.org
