



**SENIOR ACCESS POINTS
OF LARIMER COUNTY**
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY
EXTENSION

KEEP LOVE ALIVE THROUGH THE DEMENTIA JOURNEY

By

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“I am who I was, I’m just different,” is a saying of the Teepa Snow Positive Approach to Care organization. The statement suggests we must alter our approach to physical and emotional love.

Sexual love changes. So, find other ways of expressing affection. Below I paraphrase the five love languages from *Keeping Love Alive as Memory Fades* as expressed by Coauthor Gary Chapman, PHD:

- 1) Words of affirmation – “I love you,” or “You look great today.”
- 2) Quality time – give your loved one your full attention.
- 3) Gifts – small tokens of your love, Valentine candy, a birthday gift or any visible symbol of your love like homemade cookies.
- 4) Acts of Service – take your loved one to do something he/she enjoys – musical theater, shopping, rides or do normal activities together such as set the table.
- 5) Physical touch – hugs, back rubs, kisses, whether on the lips or cheek.

Other ways to show love are to hold hands, sit close together, comfort him/her when frightened, angry or agitated, rub the back or stroke a cheek, spread lotion on hands or feet, dance or listen to music.

Of the five points above, I believe the most important way to show love is through Quality Time. Here are some simple ways I showed love to husband, especially after he went into memory care.

- 1) At first he’d call several times a day. I always answered, never ignored his calls.
- 2) When he saw me walk into the memory care unit, he often held out his arms for a hug. I gave him a big one!
- 3) We held hands during my visits.
- 4) For special days like our anniversary or his birthday, I brought balloons and attached them to his dinner chair or later to his wheelchair.

- 5) Music played a large part of his life. We attended the memory care sing-along every other Tuesday. When he no longer sang, I sang; he listened, tapped his foot and/or smiled.
- 6) I decorated his door for each season and his room for Christmas.
- 7) As he declined, I held his inoperable hand while I fed him.

My ideas may not work for your loved one but, hopefully, they trigger your own ideas to keep love alive through the dementia journey, whether with a spouse, parent or sibling.

Linda L. Osmundson's award winning three-book series *How the West Was Drawn* and her latest book, *Papa's Changes, Dementia Through a Child's Eyes*, relate to readers ages 7-107! Hundreds of her articles have appeared in magazines, anthologies such as *Chicken Soup for the Soul* and newspapers. Discover more at www.LindaOsmundson.com.