



The Mosaic

A Masterpiece Living Network Newsletter About Living Well

Alone but Not Lonely

By: Danielle Palli

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I love being alone. I can go for a silent walk on the beach, do yoga and meditation out on the lanai, practice the piano or work on my novel and not talk to a single person all day – without feeling the slightest bit lonely. But, here’s the thing. If I need to talk with someone or simply be with other people, I have a wealth of loving resources: my husband, a few close friends, some trusted family members – even my pets. Choosing to spend time alone can be a wonderful experience and provides the opportunity for self-reflection. Isolation, on the other hand, or even being among people who don’t understand you – well, that’s something quite different.

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Is Dementia Inevitable?

By: Dr. Roger Landry

In a word ... no. In two words ... absolutely not! There are changes that occur with age but research tells us that our brains at age 80 don’t work all that differently than our brains at age 30 ... IF ... and this is a big if ... we use them and care for them.

We are the architects of our brains. When we feed our brains with blood by keeping physically active, regularly eating fruits, nuts, vegetables and fish (a Mediterranean diet), and get generous amounts of sleep, our brains become like trained athletes. And like athletes, we must let them perform or they will become lazy and slow. This requires us to not only use our brains, but to learn new things. Learning big things ... like a language or a new skill is a powerful and healthy brain changer. But even small things – like occasionally eating with the opposite hand, or just getting out of our comfort zone is also remarkably beneficial.

What is inevitable is that when we do these simple things ... learn, move, eat well, and get our sleep ... our brains thank us by performing at their best no matter what our age.

[CLICK HERE](#) to watch the video from Dr. Roger, “Do I Have Dementia?”

To Dance is to Live: An Interview with Maureen Mulrooney

By: Danielle Palli

“To dance is to live,” is Maureen Mulrooney’s motto. Having grown up in England, she began ballet lessons at age six, and hasn’t stopped dancing since (ballet, ballroom, contemporary ... you name it). Years later, she would marry and move to America.

In no time, she was teaching at an Arthur Murray Studio, and eventually opened one of her own. During this time, she was approached by a music therapist working at the Zeller Zone Center at Peoria State Hospital, and asked if Maureen would be interested in creating a movement therapy program to work with those who had been admitted. She accepted, creating the first dance therapy program of its kind. A year later, she expanded her initiative to include working with varied age groups. *(Continued on Page 2)*



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When 20,000 people were recently surveyed in the United States, nearly half reported being lonely. One in four felt that no one understood them, and two out of five said they felt isolated or that their relationships lacked meaning. Another study revealed that 9 million people in the UK reported feeling lonely – an epidemic that is so damaging, that the UK appointed a Minister of Loneliness.

Why is this such a big concern? Loneliness is linked to an increased risk of heart disease, stroke, arthritis, Type 2 diabetes, dementia and depression, and can increase the likelihood of mortality by 26%. Current findings suggest that the risk factor for social isolation is comparable to smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

As Dr. Roger Landry, MD, MPH tells us in his book, *Live Long, Die Short: A Guide to Authentic Health and Successful Aging*, “we are hardwired to be together.” For me, that means having an abundance of casual friends and my inner circle of a few truly close connections. These are the people that Landry would describe as “the ones you can call at 3 o’clock in the morning and know they will be there for you.” In Dan Buettner’s book, *Blue Zones of Happiness: Lessons from the World’s Happiest People* he describes those “inner circle, 3 o’clock in the morning” friends as your tribe and advises you to “find your tribe.”

How do you find your tribe? Here are some suggestions for ways to connect with others within your community.



1. **Pursue a hobby or interest.**
2. **Volunteer for a cause you care about.**
3. **Connect with a spiritual group who shares similar beliefs.**
4. **Talk to your neighbors and invite someone to lunch.**
5. **Walk your dog** (if you’re afraid to approach people, your friendly, tail-wagging dog will most likely do that work for you).
6. **Sit at a different table at dinner** (this forces you to meet new people).
7. **Be open** – When you smile at strangers, make small talk in the grocery store line or hold the door at the gym for the person behind you, you send the message that you are approachable.
8. **Talk to your Masterpiece Living Coordinator about other social opportunities at your community.**

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“I remember I was asked to work with a mute five-year-old girl who hadn’t spoken since she was three,” Maureen told me. “I played the song ‘Spinning Wheel’ and she suddenly began singing to the music. After two years of silence, she also began talking again.” Maureen went on to tell me about a traumatized teenager who “stood like a statue” and was comatose. She played different music for the teen, and when Maureen got to “I Am a Rock,” by Simon and Garfunkel, the young woman began to dance.



Over the course of her career, Maureen taught deaf children to move to rhythm by having them feel the vibration of the music coming from the speakers. She taught blind children (who have a natural tendency to become spatially confused and walk in circles) to walk toward the music (in a straight line) and learn their place in space.

Maureen even went on to teach in the school systems, helping special needs children learn spelling and math by putting words and numbers to music. “I found music that people responded to,” she said. “I led a group of children with Down’s Syndrome using their favorite songs, ‘Delta Dawn’ and ‘Happy Together,’ and they ended up putting on a recital to the delight of their parents.”

Maureen’s special gift is being empathetic and able to adapt music and dance to whomever she teaches.

Always seeking to inspire others, Maureen noticed when she moved to Querencia at Barton Creek, that her fellow residents could probably benefit from dance too. She now teaches line dancing, a moving to music class, and is currently devising a way to create chair classes to develop upper body strength and better posture. “I tell people to imagine they are moving through water, and it immediately makes them calmer and more receptive.”

Countless research studies support that dance and other physical movement activities boost memory, increase flexibility, help improve balance, reduce stress, support cardiovascular health and expand creativity.

“Dance opens up horizons and imagination,” Maureen smiled. “It makes you feel more alive. It opens up the world to you.”

Is Dementia on the Rise? Maybe Not.

By: Dr. Rob Winningham, PhD

You may have seen fear inducing headlines such as: *Dementia Cases Worldwide to Triple by 2050* (CBS News), *Middle-age Obesity Will Lead to a Surge in Dementia Cases* (The Guardian), and *Experts Predict Dementia Epidemic* (BBC News).

While it is true that the overall number of dementia cases will increase in the United States and elsewhere in the coming years, that isn't the whole story. The headline you don't often see is that the proportion of older adults with dementia is actually **decreasing**. We need to define a couple of terms epidemiologists (people who study disease and health in populations) use to describe health trends in the population.

1. **Prevalence** – the proportion of the population with a particular condition
2. **Incidence** – the number of cases in a given time period

For example, the incidence of people wearing cowboy hats in Los Angeles, CA is far higher than it is in Bandera, TX. While Bandera, TX has been called the Cowboy Capital of the World, there are only 856 people who call it home. Whereas Los Angeles, CA has almost 4 million people. Even if only 1 in 30,000 people wear a cowboy hat they will have a higher incidence, even though the proportion of people wearing cowboy hats is much lower in LA.



While it is true that the incidence (or the number of new cases) of dementia is increasing because we now have more older adults, and people are living longer (for example, in the past decade the number of people with dementia in the United States has increased by over 1 million, and that sounds kind of scary), **the prevalence (or the proportion of the population in the United States and Western Europe) has actually decreased!** A 2013 study published in the journal *Lancet* reported that the percentage of people 65 and older with dementia has plummeted 25% in the past 20 years from 8.3% to 6.2%. Similar results have been measured in the United States.

Why is the prevalence or proportion of people with dementia gone down so much? We don't know for sure but it could be a combination of lifestyle changes and medical advances.

- o Controlling cardiovascular risk factors
- o Increased cholesterol screening and drugs
- o Blood pressure monitoring
- o Better education and possibly more cognitive stimulation
- o Greater awareness of the importance of physical exercise
- o Greater awareness of the importance of good nutrition, omega 3 fatty acids, and diet

It appears that the increased awareness of how lifestyle affects our health might already be affecting dementia rates, but we still have a long way to go. We could further reduce dementia, and delay the onset of it, by doing the things that we know can maximize memory ability. We haven't discovered a magic drug to prevent dementia yet, but we are making progress finding some of the controllable factors that matter.