



SARABELLA  
SENIOR LIVING



# Exploring Innovative Approaches to Dementia Care

Enhancing Quality of Life



Dementia, a complex and often overwhelming condition, affects not only those living with it but also their families, creating a ripple effect of challenges and emotions that can be difficult to navigate. For adult children who are taking care of their aging parents, coping with the realities of dementia can be especially daunting. Individuals often find themselves grappling with feelings of sadness and frustration, having to adjust their schedules, take on new responsibilities, or constantly learn to communicate differently with their parents.

Traditional medical interventions, including medications and therapy, are vital in managing symptoms and slowing progression. However, at [SaraBella Senior Living](#), we believe that exploring alternative approaches can offer additional pathways to enhancing the lifestyles of individuals with dementia, their families, and caregivers. We're providing insights into various holistic methods that can complement conventional treatments. By incorporating these simple but effective strategies, families can find greater support on their dementia care journeys, fostering a sense of connection, understanding, and compassion as they navigate this challenging path together.

# Understanding Dementia and Its Types

The [World Health Organization](#) explains dementia as a “term for several diseases that affect memory, thinking, and the ability to perform daily activities.”

It is crucial to understand that dementia is not a singular disease in itself but rather a collection of symptoms that result from damage to the brain caused by various underlying conditions, with Alzheimer's disease being the most common. Each person's experience with dementia can be unique, manifesting in different symptoms and progression rates. Although it predominantly affects older adults, it is not considered a natural part of aging.

The impact of dementia is profound, reshaping one's ability to perform everyday tasks, altering personality, and affecting relationships, creating challenges for both the individuals living with the condition and their caregivers. Despite its challenges, understanding dementia with empathy and patience opens pathways for supportive and effective caregiving strategies.



These are four of the most common types of dementia:

## Alzheimer's Disease

As the most common form of dementia, Alzheimer's disease accounts for 60-80% of cases. It is characterized by memory impairment and behavioral changes as it progresses.

## Vascular Dementia

The second most common type, vascular dementia, is the result of reduced blood flow to the brain and often follows a stroke or a series of mini-strokes.

## Lewy Body Dementia

Marked by the presence of abnormal protein deposits in the brain, Lewy body dementia results in sleep disturbances, memory issues, and hallucinations.

## Frontotemporal Dementia

Primarily affecting younger individuals, frontotemporal dementia leads to changes in personality, behavior, and language due to damage to the frontal and temporal lobes of the brain.

# Alternative Therapies for Dementia Care

## Leading a Brain-Healthy Lifestyle

The most effective way to counter the symptoms of dementia without medication is to adopt a brain-healthy lifestyle. This lifestyle emphasizes the importance of physical activity, which can enhance overall health and cognitive function. Staying active and sharp in every dimension of an individual's wellness is crucial, from staying socially active through regular connection with friends and family that fosters a sense of belonging to challenging your brain through puzzles, learning new skills, or exploring creative outlets.

Making conscious and safe choices in daily life further contributes to well-being, while effective stress management techniques can help alleviate anxiety and promote mental clarity. Although these actions won't stop or reverse the progression of dementia, research indicates that they can enhance lifestyle and slow the disease's progression into the middle and late stages.

## Incorporating Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy is a gentle yet powerful tool in dementia care, offering relief and comfort through the use of essential oils. These oils, derived from plants, are known for their ability to influence mood and promote relaxation or alertness. For someone with dementia, familiar scents can evoke memories and feelings, providing a sense of calm.

Lavender oil, known for its soothing properties, can help reduce anxiety and promote sleep. On the other hand, peppermint oil can invigorate and stimulate, aiding in moments of fatigue or mental fog. Including aromatherapy in daily care routines is simple. Consider using an essential oil diffuser to fill a room with a calming scent or incorporating a few drops of oil into a warm bath or massage. The goal is to create a nurturing setting that supports emotional and physical well-being.

# Did You Know?

*A combination of scented oils and massage can help manage symptoms associated with dementia, such as anxiety, agitation, and depression.*

# Alternative Therapies for Dementia Care



## Enjoying Music Therapy

Music therapy is a cherished method in the world of dementia care, renowned for its ability to touch hearts and minds. Music is a universal language that transcends cognitive barriers, often stirring emotions and memories long forgotten. It can bring joy and comfort to older adults, fostering connections that words sometimes cannot.

Caregivers can integrate music therapy by picking the right tunes and creating personalized playlists with songs that are meaningful to the individual's past, uplifting mood and promoting cognitive function. Music can evoke a sense of nostalgia, encouraging reminiscence and social interaction. The aim is to use music as a bridge to connect with the individual's inner world, enhancing their emotional and mental landscape. Organize sing-alongs and dance sessions or simply play tunes during daily routines.



## Trying Pet Therapy

Animals can provide unconditional love and companionship to those with dementia. Pet therapy, involving interaction with animals such as dogs or cats, has been shown to improve mental health and bring joy to daily life. The presence of a gentle, furry companion can alleviate feelings of loneliness, reduce stress, and elevate mood.

For families considering pet ownership, it's important to weigh the responsibilities and benefits carefully. Animals require care and attention, but the rewards can be profound. Alternatively, visiting therapy animals can offer similar benefits without the long-term commitment. Pet therapy programs can be adapted to meet the unique needs of individuals facing Alzheimer's or other forms of dementia, ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for all involved.

# Alternative Therapies for Dementia Care

## **MIND and Mediterranean Diets**

Nutrition plays a crucial role in overall health, particularly in cognitive function. The MIND and Mediterranean diets are gaining attention for their potential cognitive benefits, emphasizing whole foods that nourish the body and brain.

The MIND diet, a fusion of the Mediterranean and DASH diets, highlights foods like berries, leafy greens, nuts, and fish, which are known to support brain health. Meanwhile, the Mediterranean diet focuses on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and healthy fats, such as olive oil. Incorporating these dietary principles into daily meals can be a simple yet impactful way to support cognitive well-being.

Encouraging your family member to enjoy a variety of nutrient-dense foods can be a delightful culinary adventure. Cooking together can provide opportunities for connection, creativity, and nourishment, contributing to physical and emotional health.



## **Using the Montessori Method**

Traditionally associated with education, the Montessori Method has found innovative applications in dementia care. This approach emphasizes independence, respect, and engagement in meaningful programs, making it highly compatible with the needs of older adults.

Here are the seven principles of the Montessori Method:

- 1. Independence** - Empowering individuals to maintain autonomy in daily tasks.
- 2. Prepared Setting** - Creating a supportive and adaptive space.
- 3. Respect for the Individual** - Honoring personal preferences and needs.
- 4. Engagement in Meaningful Programs** - Encouraging participation in purposeful practices.
- 5. Structure and Order** - Providing a predictable and comforting routine.
- 6. Freedom Within Limits** - Allowing choice while ensuring safety.
- 7. Self-Correction and Self-Assessment** - Promoting personal growth and reflection.

Montessori-inspired programs can include practices, lessons, or exercises that align with an individual's interests and abilities, such as gardening, art, or music. By adopting this method, caregivers can foster a sense of achievement and joy in older adults, nurturing a vibrant and fulfilling life.

# SaraBella Senior Living's Unique Approach



Our memory care community in Sarasota, FL, is dedicated to providing personalized, compassionate care tailored to each individual's needs. We recognize the value of alternative approaches and integrate them into our comprehensive care model to offer a worry-free lifestyle for your family member.

Our memory care philosophy, called Valeo™, is designed to enhance the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being of residents. We offer a high-quality service tailored to each individual's specific needs and preferences, along with Montessori-inspired programs that engage and empower them day by day. Our holistic philosophy and person-centered approach ensure that each resident receives the attention and support they deserve.

Exploring alternative approaches to dementia care can open new doors to enhancing the lifestyle of an aging parent. By incorporating methods such as the ones mentioned above, families can create enriching experiences for their relatives. These approaches, grounded in respect and compassion, offer opportunities for growth, connection, and joy.



**Is it the right time for memory care? Take the first step today by scheduling a personalized tour of our SaraBella Senior Living community in Sarasota, FL. Our Alzheimer's care experts are always happy to show you how our holistic approach, signature programming, and purposeful amenities can enhance the life of your family member facing the complexities of dementia.**