

SUPPORT Group

-----S. Parker-----Program Coordinator

March 2025

Debbie's story: 'Not enough people are aware of early onset dementia, never mind understanding it'



“At 50 years old, Debbie was told that she had mixed dementia. Following her diagnosis, the stigma surrounding dementia has had a significant impact on her life. But Debbie believes people’s attitudes towards people affected by dementia can be changed.

Debbie, 51 years old, lives in Caerphilly in Wales. Married to Steve, have three children and enjoys going on family holidays. We like entertaining friends, going to shows and having fun!

Leading up to Debbie 40th birthday, she found herself becoming increasingly stressed and tired. Debbie was working full-time in a secondary school and trying to look after her family. Steve was worked long shifts as a police officer. Debbie believes stress and tiredness were partly why she had a series of TIAs (transient ischemic attacks, or ‘mini strokes’). It was around that time she spent three weeks in hospital where she was prescribed stains and aspirin.

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Here's Debbie and her husband Steve loving life. They enjoy nights out and weekends away at caravan in West Wales

The first signs of dementia

In more recent years, Debbie started to become increasingly tired and unable to think and process as once had. People started to notice that she wasn't as organized and couldn't remember things that had once come so easily to her.

Many people said that she had lost her spark! Life outside work also became a challenge. She would get lost driving or walking to the local shop and would get confused cooking basic meals.

On one occasion, whilst shopping with her sister, she went into the changing room to try some clothes on. When Debbie had finished, she left with only a top and handbag on her shoulder – She'd had

forgotten to put her trousers on! Debbie's family was becoming increasingly concerned.

A surprising diagnosis

One morning, Debbie was at work and a colleague asked her a simple question. Debbie became confused in the classroom and left. She was found by another colleague, walking about in the corridor, not knowing where she was or recognizing who her colleague was.

Steve called, who immediately took her to the GP. She was referred to as an urgent case to the memory clinic. Debbie received a series of memory tests and scans within a matter of weeks.

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Talking to your GP

If you (or someone close to you) are worried that your symptoms may be dementia, the first thing to do is to contact your GP.

After several months of Debbie's family and her thinking of every possibility, she finally received a diagnosis. Debbie was 50 years old and was told that she had atypical

primary progressive aphasia (PPA), or 'mixed dementia'.

Sadly, on her consultant's advice, she had to retire from work. After 22 years doing a job that she loved, this was so difficult for her they were also in the process of downsizing to a smaller house, as she was becoming confused with there being so many rooms in their current home.

Stigma in public

Following Debbie's diagnosis, the stigma around dementia has had a significant impact on her life. She used to love shopping but nowadays she finds it's just too stressful and upsetting.

Here are some instances when I have felt the impact of stigma:

- In a supermarket queue, she asked why it's taking her so long to decide how many bags she needs. A cashier once said, "If it takes you this long to decide how many bags you need, then God help you!"
- Debbie's been asked if she was drunk when trying to order tickets, as she was slurring her words.
- She regularly forgets her pin number which has resulted in people 'tutting' in the queue, and occasionally frustrated managers being called over.
- When she told people that she has dementia, they have often thought it was a joke and have laughed and responded with, "Yes me too," whilst laughing.
- People regularly say to her that she can't have dementia as she's too young.
- People have been offended and upset when they have forgotten their names, walked past them or confused them with someone else.
- She's been made to feel like a criminal when forgotten to pay for things in a shop. Even when gone back to pay once she remembered or been reminded and explained that she has dementia.
- When she has asked people to speak slowly or that haven't understood something, they've become impatient.

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Keeping my independence

When speaking with reception at a GP appointment, Debbie was told that she needed to check-in using their new computer system on the wall. She attempted to do so but became very confused as it was new to her. The receptionist asked Debbie's daughter to take over. This was very frustrating for her as she wanted to check in with the receptionist herself, as she always had done. She knew this was something she could do, and didn't want to lose this independence.

How we can fight the stigma around dementia

Many want to keep independence for as long as they can, they want to enjoy life and not be worried about what people are thinking of them. Simple changes to attitudes and understanding of the condition can make a huge difference to our day-to-day living.

Enough people are not aware of early-onset dementia, never mind understanding it. Some people are too quick to stereotype!

There will come a time when we all need a little bit of help from others; for some this has just come earlier than expected.



Debbie took part in Memory Walk on 5 October 2019 at Bute Park, Cardiff



DEMENTIA RISK REDUCTION

a series by **Alzheimer's**
SERVICES
of the Capital Area

Alzheimer's Disease is a progressive brain disorder that affects memory, thinking, and behavior. As the leading cause of dementia, it gradually impairs daily life. This presentation covers its causes, symptoms, impact, and effects on individuals and families, as well as the importance of support and care.



Introduction to Alzheimer's Disease

presented by Gina Rossi,
LCSW-BACS, MSHA

Wednesday, March 19
12pm - 1pm

Alzheimer's Services
3772 North Blvd,
Baton Rouge, LA 70806

1 General Social Work CEU Provided.

Registration is required as seating is limited. Register at alzbr.org,
or contact Ellen at 225-334-7494 or programs@alzbr.org

Risk factors for Alzheimer's



disease include:

- **Age:** Alzheimer's risk increases with advancing age.
- **Gender:** Women are more likely to develop Alzheimer's.
- **Genes:** Family history and certain genes are related to Alzheimer's.
- **Head trauma:** Serious head injuries increase the risk.
- **Brain abnormalities:** Certain medical conditions and genetic predisposition.
- **Smoking, high blood pressure,** and other lifestyle factors

Causes and Risk Factors of Alzheimer's Disease

Researchers do not believe Alzheimer's disease has one specific cause. Instead, a combination of genetic, environmental, and lifestyle risk factors can contribute to the condition.

Alzheimer's disease is a condition that affects the way your brain works. In the early stages of the disease, people often experience memory loss.

It's a progressive disease, which means the symptoms affect people more and more as time passes. People with late-stage Alzheimer's often need help with most of their everyday activities, such as eating, dressing, and bathing.

Researchers are still not sure exactly what causes Alzheimer's disease, but certain factors can increase your likelihood of developing this incurable disease.

You may be able to modify some risk factors by changing certain lifestyle habits.

You can also talk with a doctor about what else you can do to lower your risk.

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What are the causes and risk factors for Alzheimer's disease?

- **Head trauma**

People who have experienced serious head injuries are at higher risk of developing Alzheimer's. The risk increases if the injury involves losing consciousness or happens repeatedly, such as in contact sports. By wearing a helmet during contact sports such as football and hockey or avoiding these activities altogether, you may be able to reduce your chances of experiencing this type of injury.

- **Smoking**

Researchers have identified Trusted smoking as a risk factor for Alzheimer's. A [2023 study from Korea Trusted Source](#) found that quitting smoking was associated with an 8% lower risk of all types of dementia and a 6% lower risk of Alzheimer's specifically.

- **High blood pressure**

High blood pressure may increase your risk of developing Alzheimer's. According to a [2010 research review Trusted Source](#), having high blood pressure in middle age is associated with a greater chance of developing Alzheimer's than having high blood pressure later in life.

- **Obesity**

In a [study](#) with more than 10,000 participants that was published in 2007, **researchers** found that a body mass index (BMI) of 25 or greater (overweight) was associated with [double the risk Trusted Source](#) of developing Alzheimer's, and a BMI of 30 or greater (obesity) was associated with triple the risk.

- **Lack of physical activity**

A low level of physical activity has been linked Trusted to dementia and Alzheimer's disease. While there is **no specific exercise regimen that can prevent dementia and Alzheimer's**, many types of physical activity and exercise **may benefit brain health**, according to a [2021 review Trusted Source](#).

Variety of **studies** that used aerobics, muscle development, and body condition workouts for varying lengths of time. They found that any activity was helpful.

The following are types of exercise that may help with reducing your risk:

Aerobic exercise, such as:

- Walking
- running
- dancing
- biking
- swimming

Muscle development exercises, such as:

- weightlifting
- use of gym equipment
- dumbbell exercises

Body conditioning exercises, such as:

- setups
- pushups
- lunges
- squats

- **Lack of mental activity**

Mental activity might be as important as physical activity for decreasing your risk of Alzheimer's disease.

Examples of mental activities include Trusted Source:

- taking a class
- socializing with family and friends
- volunteering in your community
- playing board games or cards
- reading



These mental activities may help maintain your cognitive (thinking) ability. Social interaction also helps. The key is to pick activities that challenge you. **Researchers** are not sure why this works. One **theory** is that these challenges help your brain develop more internal connections Trusted Source, which protect against dementia.

- **Diet**

A heart-healthy diet may benefit cognitive function, according to the Alzheimer's Association. The Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) diet and the Mediterranean diet may lower your risk of both heart disease and dementia.

These diets involve:

- eating lots of fruits, vegetables, and low-fat dairy
- eating poultry, fish, and whole grains
- eating foods that are low in saturated fat, total fat, and cholesterol
- limiting red meat, sweets, sugary beverages, and sodium

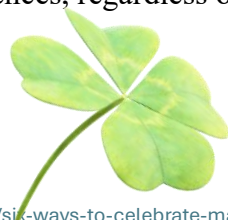
• Age

Alzheimer's is not a natural part of growing older, but older age is a risk factor for developing it. According to the Alzheimer's Association, about 1 in 9 people ages 65 and older in the United States have Alzheimer's, and 73% of them are 75 or older.

• Gender

Women outnumber men when it comes to Alzheimer's. In fact, almost two-thirds of people living with Alzheimer's in the United States are women. By the time they reach 65 years of age, women have a 20% chance of developing Alzheimer's. Women in their 60s are twice as likely to develop Alzheimer's as they are to get breast cancer.

One of the main reasons women may have higher rates of Alzheimer's than men is that women tend to live longer, on average, and older age is a significant risk factor for the condition. But **researchers** have started to explore whether women may be at a higher risk for Alzheimer's because of biological or genetic differences, regardless of age.



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• Genes

Researchers have found two classes of genes related to Alzheimer's: deterministic genes and risk genes. Deterministic genes nearly guarantee that people will develop the disease if they live long enough. People with deterministic genes often develop symptoms of Alzheimer's sometime in their early 40s through their mid-50s. But this is rare: Deterministic genes cause about 1% of all Alzheimer's cases.

People with risk genes may or may not develop the disease, but they're more likely to develop it than people without risk genes. The gene that's most commonly associated with Alzheimer's is called apolipoprotein E-e4 (APOE-e4).

• Family history

Alzheimer's often runs in families. If you have a parent, sibling, or child with the disease, you're more likely to develop it yourself. Your risk goes up if multiple family members have Alzheimer's. This could be due to genes, lifestyle factors, or a combination of the two.

The gene APOE-e4 plays a role here too.
APOE-e4 coupled with a family history of
the disease significantly increases your risk.

• Brain abnormalities

Scientists have identified brain abnormalities in people who are likely to later develop Alzheimer's. One is the presence of tiny clumps of protein known as plaques. The other is twisted protein strands or tangles. Inflammation, tissue shrinkage, and loss of connection between brain cells are other clues that Alzheimer's may develop.



Frequently asked questions about Alzheimer's disease risk factors and causes

Can someone avoid getting Alzheimer's?

It's not possible to prevent Alzheimer's because its exact causes are not well understood. However, eating a heart-healthy diet, exercising, engaging in mentally challenging activities, lowering your blood pressure, and protecting your head during physical activities such as contact sports may lower your risk.

What are the early signs of Alzheimer's?

In early stages of Alzheimer's, people often experience memory loss, such as forgetting conversations, events, and the names of familiar people and places. As the disease progresses, the symptoms can include:

- trouble with familiar tasks, such as using a microwave
- difficulties with problem-solving
- trouble with speech or writing

When should I speak with my doctor about symptoms?

You should speak with a doctor if you're having problems with memory loss that are out of the ordinary for you and experiencing difficulties with thinking. It's also a good idea to talk with a

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doctor if relatives or friends who spend a lot of time around you have noticed a decrease in your memory.

Takeaway

Make an appointment with a doctor if you're concerned about your risk of developing Alzheimer's. Keep a journal of any memory problems or other symptoms you're having and go over it at your appointment. **Although there's no cure for Alzheimer's, an early diagnosis will allow you to start treatment that can help you manage your symptoms and possibly slow down the progression of the disease.**



6 ways to celebrate Mardi Gras with your senior loved one

1. **Dress up!** Green, gold and purple are the colors of the day when it comes to Mardi Gras celebrations.
2. **Make your own masks !** You can go Mardi Gras from head to toe or just keep it above the shoulders by making your own mask!
3. **Break out the décor ...**
4. **Listen to jazz ...**
5. **Throw a homemade parade ...**
6. **Eat King Cake**



Irish Jokes



The Clever Leprechaun:
Why don't you ever iron a
four-leaf clover? Because
you don't want to press
your luck.....

Women's History Month Theme 2025



The National Women's History Alliance designates a yearly theme for Women's History Month. The 2025 theme, "Moving Forward Together," celebrates "Women Educating and Inspiring Generations." This theme celebrates the collective strength, equality, and influence of women who have dedicated their lives to education, mentorship, and leadership, shaping the minds and futures of all generations.

Why Do We Celebrate Women's History Month?

Women's History Month is a dedicated month to reflect on the often-overlooked contributions of women to U.S. history. From Abigail Adams to Susan B. Anthony, Sojourner Truth to Rosa Parks, the timeline of women's history milestones stretches back to the founding of the United States.

The actual celebration of Women's History Month grew out of a weeklong celebration of women's contributions to culture, history and society organized by the school district of Sonoma, California, in 1978. Presentations were given at dozens of schools, hundreds of students participated in a "Real Woman" essay contest and a parade was held in downtown Santa Rosa.

A few years later, the idea caught on within communities, school districts and organizations across the country. In 1980, President Jimmy Carter issued the first presidential proclamation declaring the week of March 8 as National Women's History Week. The U.S. Congress followed suit the next year, passing a resolution establishing a national celebration. Six years later, the National Women's History Project successfully petitioned Congress to expand the event to the entire month of March.

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Upcoming Support Group Meeting

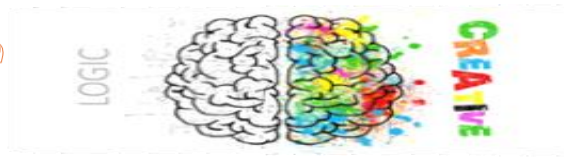
- 3.7.25 Denham Spring** 12:00 pm
- 3.4.25 Alzheimer's Services** via zoom 10am
- 3.14.25 In the Beginning** via zoom 2:30pm
- 3.13.25 Greenwell** 11am
- 3.10.25 First Baptist (Zachary)**12pm
- 3.10.25 Charlie's Place (Gonzales)**2:00pm
- 3.17.25 Parkview Baptist** 1pm
- 3.17.25 New Roads** 4pm
- 3.18.25 Pm Support Group** 7pm

Facilitator

Shyrell Parker, Program Coordinator
Alzheimer's Services
PH: (225)408-3101



Brain teaser



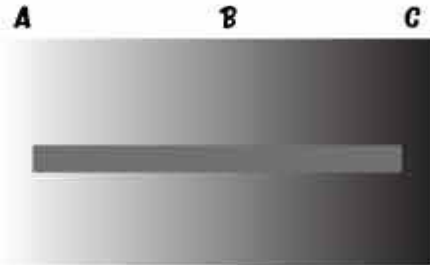
Brain Teasers 6

1

Change these 3 squares into one by removing 1 match and moving 2 others



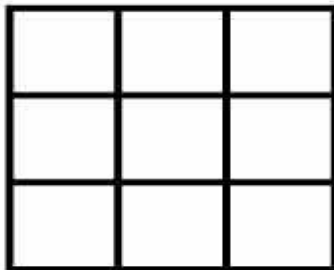
2



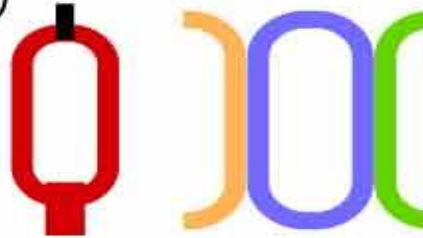
Where is the inside rectangle darkest, A, B, or C?

3

15
Place the numbers 1 to 9 in the boxes so that each row of 3 adds to fifteen



4



What word can you see?

5

What is the 9 letter word?

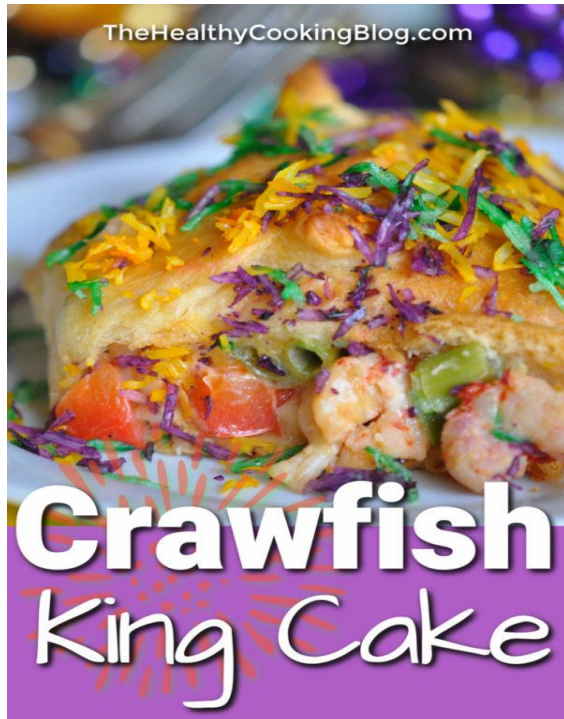


6

Riddle -

What has has 1 thumb and four fingers but is not alive ?





Crawfish King Cake

Ingredients

- 1/2 cup chopped onion
- 1/2 cup chopped red or green bell pepper
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 cup Louisiana crawfish tails
- 1/3 cup chopped green onion
- 3 tablespoons reduced-fat cream cheese
- 2 cans reduced-fat crescent rolls 8-ounce

Instructions

1. Preheat oven 350°F. Coat 10-inch round pizza pan lined with foil with nonstick cooking spray.
2. In nonstick skillet coated with nonstick cooking spray, sauté onion, red pepper and garlic until tender. Add crawfish, green onion and cream cheese, stirring until creamy. Remove from heat.
3. Separate crescent rolls at perforations, into 16 slices. Place slices around prepared pan with points in the center.

About halfway down from points, the press seams together.

4. Spread crawfish mixture on dough in the center where seams have been pressed together. Fold dough points over filling, then fold bottom of triangle over points forming circular roll like king cake.
5. Bake about 20–25 minutes or until golden brown. Sprinkle with Mardi
6. Instructions
7. In three small bowls, divide the cheese. First bowl, add a few drops of yellow food coloring. Next bowl, add a few drops of green food coloring. Last bowl, add equal amounts of red and blue food coloring (to create purple).
8. Sprinkle cheese over baked king cake. Return to oven for 1-2 minutes or until cheese melts.

MARDI GRAS TOPPING

Ingredients

- 6 tbsp Parmesan cheese grated
- Yellow, green, red, and blue food coloring

Instructions

In three small bowls, divide the cheese. First bowl, add a few drops of yellow food coloring. Next bowl, add a few drops of green food coloring. Last bowl, add equal amounts of red and blue food coloring (to create purple). Sprinkle cheese over baked king cake. Return to oven 1-2 minutes or until cheese melts.

Nutritional Info

Per Serving: Calories 136, Calories from fat 46%, Fat 7g, Saturated Fat 2g, Cholesterol 26mg, Sodium 317mg, Carbohydrate 15g, Dietary Fiber 0g, Sugars 3g, Protein 6g, Dietary Exchanges: 1 starch, 1/2 lean meat, 1 fat

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