

Stress Management Is a Form of Dementia Prevention

The findings of a newly released Swedish study which found that women in their late 30's, 40's and 50's who experience high levels of stress are at an increased risk for developing Alzheimer's disease or some other form of dementia later life is extremely important for anyone who is interested in dementia prevention. The fact that it looked at several different types of stressors at regular intervals over a 38 year period lends credibility to other studies which have explored a possible link between stress and the development of dementia. What separates this study from others is the fact that it examined different types of stressors in 800 middle-aged Swedish women e.g. getting divorced, suffering a serious illness, seeing a close relative battle mental illness or alcoholism. Their symptoms of distress such as fear, sleeping problems and irritability were also examined.

Given that the stressors identified in the Swedish study are a normal part of life for many suggests that coping strategies and stress management techniques may offer a unique form of dementia prevention in later life. While there are a plethora of stress management approaches available to the public, coping strategies for highly stressful situations are not - even fewer for catastrophic events like the death of a child or a spouse during middle age. Some strategies that have proven useful include:

- Use stress management techniques that work for YOU - not other people – e.g.
 - Meditation, Prayer, Quiet time
 - Yoga, Walking, Swimming
 - A good cry

- Eat a nourishing meal every day
- Find a way to get a good night's sleep
- Find a support group
- Let go of things that are out of your control
- Let other people help you when possible
- Eat some chocolate
- Remember: Managing Stress has Long Term Benefits!

Written October 1, 2013 by:

Deborah A. Forrest, Ph.D.

Registered Psychologist

Author of "Touch the Spirit: Connecting to the Inner World of Dementia"

Greater Atlanta, Georgia