

# AGING TODAY

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## GUIDES TO THE DEMENTIA JOURNEY

Three recent books offer help for families and insights for professionals caring for an elder with dementia.

**Navigating the Alzheimer's Journey: A Compass for Caregiving** by Carol Bowlby Sifton (Baltimore: Health Professions Press, 2004); paperback, 652 pages.

Although this volume is bulky, it is very readable and chock full of well-organized information for family caregivers and professionals in health and aging. Sifton, founder and editor of the journal *Alzheimer's Care Quarterly*, is an occupational therapist and care consultant who provided care to her mother.

Printed with large, well-spaced type that should be easy on older eyes, the book includes 10 sections containing from two to nine chapters each. Among the sections are "Care for the Caregiver," "Basic Information on Dementia," "Maintaining a Familiar Lifestyle" and "Care Planning." Besides an extensive resource list, the book also includes an appendix titled "All About Me" that has space for a range of material, such as medical information, details about family and friends, lifestyle preferences and employment history.

**Dementia Caregivers Share Their Stories: A Support Group in a Book** by Lynda A. Markut and Anatole Crane (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005); hardback and paperback, 253 pages.

Markut, clinical director of the nonprofit Family Alliance in Woodstock, Ill., and Crane, a retired microbiologist and president of the Family Alliance board of directors, have both been caregivers, she for her mother and he for his wife. The authors intersperse their own personal stories and observations, as well as those of other caregivers, with practical advice. The voices in the text come from the authors plus 26 other pairs of caregivers and care recipients who were interviewed for the book. The 13 chapters discuss such areas as the early symptoms of dementia, coping with challenging behavioral changes, dealing with stress and finding opportunities to grow from the caregiving experience.

**The Best Friends Book of Alzheimer's Activities** by Virginia Bell, David Troxel, Tonya Cox and Robin Hamon (Baltimore: Health Professions Press, 2004); paperback, 199 pages.

This workbook—brightly announcing "147 fun, easy and enriching activities!" on its cover—is a companion to Bell and Troxel's highly regarded books, *The Best Friends Approach to Alzheimer's Care* and *The Best Friends Staff*, as well as the *Best Friends* video. The activities guide is cleanly designed, presenting each activity on one page in a simple, straightforward manner with white space used to advantage. A grid at the beginning of the book enables activity directors to see quickly which activities involve any of 10 factors, such as whether they involve the arts, exercise or nature, are suitable for participants with early or late dementia, or are best conducted in the evenings, for example. The guidebook is organized into nine chapters with such themes as "Being Together Between Structured Times," "Doing for Others," "Personal Care As an Activity" and "After-Dinner Activities." ❖