

Retirement Fund for Religious

Sponsored by the
National Religious Retirement Office



Spring 2022
Volume 35
No. 1

News

Message from the Executive Director

In this Issue

Director's Message	1
Walking Together	2-3
NRRO Calendar	3



The National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) created the new, on-demand video series *Walking Together: Making Our Way Along the Dementia Path* in response to religious institutes' requests for additional education on dementia. (*For more information, see pages 2-3.*) Watching these videos, I was surprised that I did not feel overwhelmed by the topic. Our presenter, Dayna Larson-Hurst, breaks down this complex subject into a series of more manageable segments.

Each video (only about 45 minutes long) includes practical suggestions to help persons living with dementia engage with the world around them. The takeaway for me is that while there may not be the time, staff, or resources to implement every recommendation, there are a variety of simple actions that can improve the quality of life for persons living with dementia.

I think Dayna's approach offers a good strategy for addressing other eldercare concerns. Maybe we set aside one hour a week or one afternoon a month to learn about a specific area. Once we have that issue in hand, we can move on, building on what we already know.

It may be reassuring to remember your religious institute is not alone. The community down the road or across town may face similar challenges and have ideas to share. Consider collaborating with them to discern the best way forward.

In all these efforts, our office stands ready to assist. From videos to 60-minute webinars to quick-read publications, our bite-size resources can help in addressing retirement and eldercare issues—one step at a time.

God bless,

Sister Stephane Still, PBVM

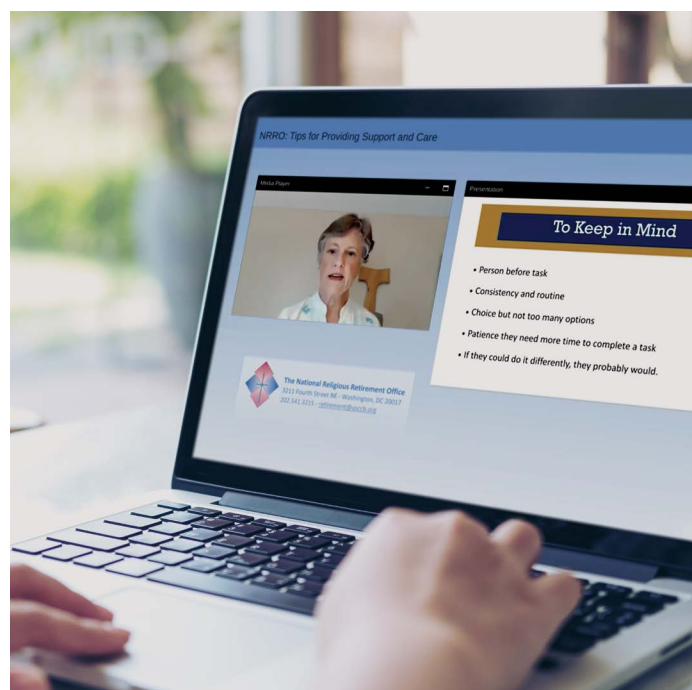
Walking Together: Helping Persons Living With Dementia Find Well-Being

Caring for those living with dementia is a recurring challenge for many religious communities. Recently, the NRRO launched the virtual series *Walking Together: Making Our Way Along the Dementia Path* featuring five workshops that explore different aspects of dementia care.

This free, on-demand program is presented by NRRO-affiliated consultant Dayna Larson-Hurst, a nationally certified Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia Care Practitioner Trainer. Here, she offers insights on helping persons living with dementia find peace and well-being.



Dayna Larson-Hurst has ministered in Catholic healthcare for more than 20 years.



The NRRO's free series includes five virtual workshops.

Dayna, you have a personal connection to dementia. How does this motivate your work?

Both my parents lived with dementia. Early on, I realized I had to educate myself on their specific forms of dementia because there are different types with different manifestations. I also had to be curious about their unique needs and individual reactions to various situations. Over time, this curiosity allowed me to make connections and to respond in ways that promoted a greater sense of peace for each of them. Of course, I made mistakes! But I learned from them.

I am motivated to help people understand they can have an enormous impact on well-being—and what a gift that is for both the caregiver and the person living with dementia.

What is “overcaring”? How can it negatively impact persons living with dementia?

I believe overcaring is usually done out of love. We don't want to see people struggle, so we take over and do things for them. But taking over is also taking away. We should aim to help persons living with dementia do as much for themselves as possible. So, if they can no longer brush their teeth, perhaps they can still rinse. These tasks may seem inconsequential, but they can be vital to a person's sense of self and self-worth.

Many readers may be surprised to learn that persons living with dementia can continue to learn and grow.

That's right. The brain can continue to make new connections—if given the opportunity. Persons with dementia can learn to do new things or relearn how to do old things in a new way. They may not be able to do things as well as they did previously. That's okay. We need to let go of perfect and focus on helping the person engage right here, right now.

If a priest can no longer say Mass, can he instead do a reading at Mass? If so, what kind of support might he need? Perhaps we type the reading on a separate page so he doesn't have to find it in the Lectionary. As caregivers, we continually need to look for creative ways to help persons living with dementia connect with the world around them.

You stress the importance of creating a homelike environment. What are simple, cost-conscious changes that can have an impact?

Many modifications for persons living with dementia cost little or nothing. For example, we can label their dresser drawers so it's easier for them to find specific clothing. We can post a simple calendar of the day's activities to help them know what to expect. And importantly, we can remain flexible. It takes persons with dementia longer to complete basic tasks like dressing or eating. The more we can build flexibility into the routine, the more pressure it takes off everyone.

The real goal is to make the space feel like home because we feel safe and secure at home. We know where things are and what to expect, so we have less anxiety.

Inevitably, caregivers will encounter “challenging” or “difficult” behaviors. You suggest renaming these instances as “responsive” behaviors. Why is this distinction important?

If we label a behavior as difficult or challenging, we are conveying that a person has control over it—that it's intentional. Instead, we can ask, “What is causing this

response? What is the person trying to communicate? Is he or she hungry, tired, lonely, scared, in pain?” The more we can identify what is motivating the behavior, the better equipped we'll be to develop strategies to help a person cope.

What are your recommendations if you suspect someone is experiencing memory loss?

If you have concerns, don't hide them. Seek medical assistance from a dementia specialist. Have clarity about what is occurring so you can begin to develop a plan to move forward.

What are the top three learnings you hope viewers will take away from the virtual series?

It is fundamental to recognize that if persons living with dementia could do things differently, they would. We need to always remember that the issue is with the person's brain—not the person.

I hope viewers embrace the necessity of providing persons living with dementia with tasks and activities that promote a sense of accomplishment. Dementia has taken so much from them. What can we give back?

Finally, I think caregivers underestimate the difference they can make. More than anything, I hope viewers understand they have a profound opportunity to promote peace and well-being for persons living with dementia.

NRRO Calendar

June

13–20 Direct Care Assistance checks mailed

August

2–4 CMSM Assembly, Buffalo, NY

9 NRRO Webinar: Topic TBD

9–12 LCWR Assembly, St. Louis, MO



National Religious Retirement Office

Sponsor of the Retirement Fund for Religious

**3211 Fourth Street NE
Washington DC 20017-1194**

Phone (202) 541-3215

Fax (202) 541-3053

Email retirement@usccb.org

Websites

usccb.org/nrro

retiredreligious.org

Staff

Executive Director

Sister Stephanie Still, PBVM

sstill@usccb.org

Grants Specialist

Mrs. Monica Glover

mglover@usccb.org

Education & Outreach Manager

John Knutsen

jknutsen@usccb.org

Program Associate

Ms. Karen Cañas

kcanas@usccb.org

Adjunct Staff

Sister Anna Marie Tag, RSM

NRROConsult-AMTag@usccb.org

Ms. Dayna Larson-Hurst

NRROConsult-DLHurst@usccb.org

Stay Connected

Please send changes in address, phone, email, or congregational leadership to the NRRO, c/o Karen Cañas (kcanas@usccb.org), so that we may keep our records and mailing lists updated.

The National Religious Retirement Office coordinates the national collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious and distributes these funds to eligible religious institutes for their retirement needs. Our mission is to support, educate, and assist religious institutes in the United States to embrace their current retirement realities and to plan for the future.

NON-PROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE
PAID
USCCB

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops
National Religious Retirement Office
3211 Fourth Street NE
Washington DC 20017-1194
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED