Memory Cafés

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With thanks to Susan H. McFadden, Ph.D.,
Co-founder, Fox Valley Memory Project, Wisconsin
We will cover…

• Key features of the memory café model

• Effective practices in starting/sustaining a memory café

• Resources for starting your own café
JF&CS Memory Café, Waltham, MA

Percolator Memory Café Network

117 Cafés throughout Massachusetts
Why do Alzheimer’s/Memory Cafés exist?

“All of our friends disappeared.”
Key ingredients

* Welcoming atmosphere  
* Focus on social connection  
* Designed for care partners AND people living with dementia
Key ingredients

* Any stage, any underlying condition
* No one is asked their diagnosis
* Tailored to local interests, language, needs
Cafés vs. Respite or Support Groups

- Designed for the care partner also
- A care partner is usually required for those who need personal care assistance

- Not problem focused; no one is asked their diagnosis. There is usually no intake process.
- “Leave the disease at the door.”
History of Cafés

• Dr. Bere Miesen started the first café in Holland, 1997

• 2000 – began to spread through Europe, Australia, U.K.

• 2008 – first U.S. cafés in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and Roseville, Minnesota. Most states now have several cafés, and Wisconsin and Massachusetts each have over 100.
Tips and Pearls:

1. Where to hold your café
2. Inclusion, outreach and attendance
3. Activities that work for all
4. The role of volunteers
5. Financial sustainability
Where to hold your café
Location, Location, Location

Venues used by Massachusetts cafés:

- Senior center
- Library
- Community center
- Day program
- House of worship
- Town hall
- Long term care residence
- Restaurant
- Museum/historical society
- Nature center
- Outdoor garden
- Arts organization
- Bowling alley
Inclusion, Outreach, and Attendance
Memory Cafés strive to be inclusive –

- free of charge (donations accepted)
- physically accessible
- free of stigma
- responsive to the different cultures and needs in the neighborhood
Early stage or all stages?

Advantages to serving people at any stage:
• Café will not require screening or exclusion
• You will be able to serve people for longer, and build a sense of community (remember: disease progression can be rapid)

Concerned about serving guests with advanced dementia?
• Require guests needing personal care assistance to bring a care partner
• Percolator survey of 56 cafés shows that cafés rarely have problems with guests due to dementia symptoms
Inclusive AND Specialized Cafés

• Massachusetts has Spanish, Portuguese and Chinese speaking cafés.

• Nine Massachusetts cafes receive funds from the state Department of Developmental Services to include people with an intellectual/developmental disability (I/DD) plus dementia.

• Plymouth, England has a café for football (e.g., soccer) fans held at the stadium.
Outreach & attendance

Percolator survey (n=67):
• Average attendance: 13 people
• Range of attendance: 0 – 45 people
• Best referral source: word of mouth
• Biggest challenge: lack of familiarity with memory cafe concept, followed by lack of staff time for outreach
Attendance/flexibility

• You never know who or how many will drop in.
• It’s not a failure if it’s a small number.
• Do require advance notice for a group (e.g., from residential care).
• Those needing personal care assistance need to bring someone – and care partners are encouraged to attend for their own benefit, too!
• Attending cafés together is a wonderful way for friends to stay connected to someone who is living with dementia.
Activities that work for all
Typical Café Activities

- Singing, listening to music
- Dancing
- Drumming
- Art appreciation
- Collage or other art-making
- Improv/theater games
- Local history presentation
- Flower arranging/seed planting
- Writing and reading poetry
- Sharing photos
- Intergenerational activities
- Baby animal visits
- “Virtual” travel (see “Tales and Travel Memory Program”)
- Games
- Cooking
- Yoga
- Field trips
Tips

• Don’t overschedule.
• Make it interactive! Tell guest facilitators: it’s not a performance.
• Make it “failure free.”
• Avoid intrusive background music.
• Consider opportunities for your café guests to make or do things for others. It’s good for the soul!
• Don’t infantilize. Anchor activities in a dignified tradition.
• If a guest is loud/uninhibited, acknowledge that all responses are welcome!
• Each café crowd is different. Try things, and ask for feedback!
The role of volunteers
Benefits of Volunteers

• Volunteers’ main job: “party hosts.”
• They provide smiling faces and helping hands.
• They can make the café crowd multigenerational, more representative of your community.
• Volunteers gain a different view of dementia.
• Supervision, and brief training is needed.
  – Brief in-person training just before café starts
  – Training at a separate time
  – Written tip sheets
Financial Sustainability
Funding your café

• Costs $8k - $12k annually
• Biggest cost is coordinator’s time
• Most coordinators are paid staff rather than volunteers
• Business sponsorships help many cafés cover expenses AND engage the broader community
• Have a written sponsorship agreement that sets clear boundaries so that guests do not feel that someone is marketing to them
Resources

Toolkit
Visit www.jfcsboston.org/Percolator

• Toolkit (English) www.jfcsboston.org/MemoryCafeToolkit
• Toolkit (Spanish) www.jfcsboston.org/GuiaCafeDeMemoria

Videos include:
• Creating a Spanish-speaking Memory Café: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vn3-I0xjpFE
• I/DD inclusive Memory Cafés: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EE49z4CpyP8
• How to create a Memory Café network: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XSs0n4Hpt7U&feature=youtu.be
• TEDx talk: Memory cafes: making space for dementia and joy: https://youtu.be/vje71rXP8Z0

And more!
More Memory Café Resources

Wisconsin Memory Café Programs: A Best Practice Guide: http://wai.wisc.edu/publichealth/guides.html

National, regional or individual café sites:
• www.memorycafedirectory.com
• www.jfcsboston.org/MemoryCafeDirectory
• http://www.foxvalleymemoryproject.org/memory-cafes.php
• https://arthursresidentialcare.com/memorycafe/
• http://nymemorycenter.org/memory-arts-cafe/

Other café websites:
• www.memorycafecatalyst.org
• http://www.alzheimerscafe.com
• http://www.actonalz.org/engagement (see “meaningful engagement”)

Book: The Alzheimer’s and Memory Café: How to start and succeed with your own café, by Jytte Fogh Lokvig, available on Amazon
Memory Café Research
(organized by date)


Feel free to contact me!

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