

Piece of Mind

Useful Tools

By Mary Sharp

A pocket watch. Scarf.
Deck of cards. Necklace.
Each object represents an
avenue for connecting to
someone living with
dementia.



In most of our programs we discuss what we describe as the “trigger/flash” phenomenon in dementia care. **A trigger**, as we see it, **is considered any question, statement, item or action** that sparks a memory from the past. **The flash is the memory** retrieved in response to the trigger.

Much like a firework, we have no idea how big and beautiful that flash (or memory) will be or how long the moment will last. Fortunately, that does not matter. *What matters is that the moment existed.* A person with dementia is often unable to reminisce alone, but when a carer uses strategic triggers, for a glorious instant, the elder may connect with his or her identity.

Caregivers have an opportunity with the use of visual tools to reorient and comfort those with dementia.

WITH APPRECIATION...

We'd like to thank the Kansas City Regional Home Care Association for presenting us with the Barbara Johnson Education Award for 2008. It is an honor to be recognized and associated with such a compassionate group of people. A special thanks to Kendallwood Hospice in Riverside, Missouri.

Rachel and I never have our “props bag” too far out of reach, because by offering or showing familiar objects to elders with dementia, a sense of nostalgia and recognition typically jump-starts a conversation.

For this reason we have collaborated with Amy Cecil, the founder and artisan of *AppleScraps*. With very little input from us, **Amy has designed ten extraordinary (and generational) pendants which are available for purchase** through her website.

<http://applescraps.com/html/edcon.html>

We believe these are works of art and valuable caregiving tools. With a well-placed question (backed up with great listening and observation skills), a stressful moment can transform into a delightful exchange. For example, if an elder seems agitated and uncertain, you might reach for your necklace with the cultural iconic image of “Rosie the Riveter.” After asking the simple question, “Do you recognize this strong-looking lady?” conversation very well might flow into the hardships during World War II when six million women entered the workforce.



Having a “trigger” accessible and within reach provides great peace of mind when the going gets tough. It's nice to know that this type of gift or personal purchase might also uplift your spirits this holiday season.

An Innovative Way to Unlock Memories

By Amy Cecil

Founder of *AppleScraps* jewelry



I have so much respect for the passion and insight my friend, Rachel, and her mother bring to their work in dementia care. Rachel has also long been a supporter of the jewelry I design, so I was thrilled when she made the suggestion of bringing together our specialties in a line of pendants.

As Rachel and Mary often share, unlocking an elder's past can sometimes be as simple as using a "trigger" to "flash" special memories. So simple, but so brilliant! There are as many unique sets of triggers as there are elders, but some images, for example, are shared by a generation. Everything from a classic car to a beautiful bird can spark a fun and lively one-on-one, small or large group discussion.

Keeping a couple of these familiar images with you could be a helpful tool in drawing an elder out...or for reconnecting with someone in a crucial moment.

Together, **AppleScraps and The Edcon Group have created a limited edition series of necklaces that capture unique images to use in daily interactions.** No one would guess that your beautiful, vintage-looking pendant is a valuable tool for enjoying and engaging those in your care. Pretty jewelry that helps you connect as a caregiver. How nice is that? Consider rewarding yourself or your staff for bringing happiness and comfort to some of our most precious people...or perhaps gift a piece to a special elder.

This exclusive selection of reversible necklaces has been carefully chosen to appeal to both ladies and gentlemen.

We brainstormed subjects that would likely have sentimental meaning, and I drew inspiration from my own experiences, as well.

Three years ago, my beloved grandmother died of Alzheimer's. She'd lost her own father to it, and, after that, she always fretted that it would find her, too. One afternoon during a visit with her in Colorado, she told me with great relief that at her last check-up the doctor had said she was still completely clear. She'd already given me that report three times since lunch. My heart sank.

The next day it came up in conversation that I had never seen the movie *Casablanca*. "Well, we need to take care of that right away!" she exclaimed, and soon I found myself snuggled up under a blanket with her, watching the opening credits as she told me she'd first seen it with "a boy who went away and died in the war." Even though at that time she'd been married to my grandpa for 56 years, I got the feeling that this "boy" had been important to her.



So the *Casablanca* necklace is for my feisty, funny, loving Grandma, and her clear memory of a romantic movie she watched with a "boy" so long ago. On the other side is a vintage skiing poster, because she and my grandpa loved to hit the slopes with their four children.

All necklaces in this special collection have two different images, back-to-back (see next page for design choices).

A picture is truly worth a thousand words, and it can be worth a thousand memories as well. Visit www.applescraps.com/html/edcon.html, a link created exclusively for friends of *The Edcon Group*, to find a necklace that will hold meaning for you and your elders.

And, thank you for continuously uplifting those who depend upon you.

TO PURCHASE GO TO: <http://applescraps.com/html/edcon.html>

War Bonds Soldier
and
Pin-up Nurse



Exciting Football
and
Let's Golf

Cherubs
and
Baby and Puppy in tub



Mighty Robot
and
Paper Dolls

Eiffel Tower
and
Statue of Liberty



Roses
and
Sunflower Fairy

Sunflower
and
Meadow-lark



Skiers
and
Casa-blanca

Tractor
and
Co-op Chick



Uncle Sam
and
Rosie the Riveter

Greetings from Missouri



Over the years we have adapted to life on the road....and sending postcards has become one of our very favorite ways to stay in touch with people we love. It's simple, cheap and profoundly meaningful (as it turns out) to both the sender and receiver.

Dorothy Dome, (a dear family friend and elder living in Kansas City) is someone we write often. During a visit to Dorothy's

home, she showed us her collection of postcards neatly arranged in a ribbon framework. Her clever design allows multiple cards to hang on the wall and, depending upon her mood and interest, she can view the front images or flip the piece over to read handwritten messages. All this time we assumed we were sending just a postcard...destined for the trash can. Little did we know each card was to become a work of art displayed proudly and creatively on Dorothy's living room wall.

We now understand the deeper value and purpose in mailing postcards. Every time Dorothy opens her mailbox to find a small note from someplace like Southern Missouri or New York, she feels instantly connected to those far away.

Holiday Tip: *If a loved one or elder in your care has received Christmas cards, consider displaying them in a similar ribbon framework seen here. Simply cut the card in half and position the inside sentiment on one side and the card illustration on the other.*



For information about programs we offer, articles and much more, go to:

www.edcongroup.org

Good Laugh from Lee's Summit, MO:

Kelley regularly visited her mother (Margaret) in the memory care center. While eating meals together, Margaret always went for the dessert first....often stopping there. Well, one day Kelley looked at her mom and said, "You know...you always taught me to eat the dessert last." Her mother replied, "**Things have changed.**"