



## Exploring Life Beyond Adulthood

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# The New Dementia Story: Momentia

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Dementia. Latin for “without mind.” In a world defined by the phrase, “I think, therefore I am,” there is nothing more terrifying. And dementia is on the rise. But in the midst of the fear, in the midst of the anxiety, in the midst of the despair, something else is brewing. It is brewing and it is overflowing and it is unstoppable. It is telling **the new dementia story**. It is momentia.

What is momentia?

Momentia is a joyful proclamation. Momentia declares the new dementia story, a story not of fear, isolation, despair, futility and loss, but a story of hope, connection, growth, purpose and courage. Momentia affirms a story told by the lips and lives of people living with dementia, a story of living fully and boldly in the moment. In words, it's told by **Roger as he states, "I'm not scared anymore; I look for opportunities to engage."** It's told by members of Seattle's Greenwood Senior Center early stage memory loss program, as they assert: **"I'm still here."** **"I'm still able."** "I'm a person first." In lives, the story is told as a man savors the familiar thrill of reeling in a wild salmon, his eyes twinkling and his face lit with a broad grin. It's told as a woman carefully appraises the brilliant color of a fall leaf on the table in front of her, dips her brush into the thick red paint, and spreads a bold streak across her paper. It's told as a man strums his guitar at a local cafe, his fingers finding their joyful way, his wife singing along as they lead others living with dementia in a rousing rendition of "You Are My Sunshine." Momentia exclaims, "there is hope!" And not just hope in a future cure, but hope in this moment.

## **Dementia is not contagious. Momentia is.**

Momentia is an irrepressible community transformation. Around the world, a movement is rising. It is a movement that publicly demonstrates the new dementia story through the exponential growth of opportunities for people living with dementia to engage in community. As people living with dementia increasingly take the lead, as more and more cities and nations declare themselves "dementia-capable," as expanding numbers of theaters, bookstores, parks, museums, community centers and coffee shops offer innovative dementia-friendly experiences like theater improv, watercolor painting, snowshoe hikes, poetry readings, Alzheimer's Cafes

and art gallery tours, the new dementia story is being told in a powerful public voice that captivates, inspires and ignites. This is momentia – a worldwide phenomenon – pulsing with life, spreading like fire. It’s a movement – momentum – forward motion. Dementia is not contagious. Momentia is.

Momentia is an exhilarating invitation. There’s a new dementia story being told, and we can all be a part of it. The old dementia story mocked and exhausted us: “Why bother? You can’t make a difference anyway. Dementia is a hopeless situation.” In response, the new dementia story laughs brightly, undaunted, and invites us with a refreshing voice: “Come! You can make a difference, with delight and with ease. Your particular gifts can be of use in countless ways.” Working together with people living with dementia, and carried along by the joy of the movement, we can ask ourselves: what small part of the new dementia story most enlivens us? What part are we bursting to tell? This is the energizing invitation of momentia.

Can we listen carefully to the new dementia story as told by the words and lives of people living with dementia, and begin to share it? Can we share it intentionally and exuberantly with friends, family, neighbors and co-workers as a way to overcome the fear and shame of the old dementia story?

Can we invite people living with dementia to take a leadership role in our organizations, congregations or neighborhoods, or if we live with dementia, can we offer our stories, skills and perspectives on behalf of the movement for dementia-friendly communities?

Can we write a poem, compose a song, or produce a film celebrating the strengths of people living with dementia?

Can we use our research background to study the positive effects of

nonpharmacological approaches to dementia, such as creative arts and community engagement?

Can we publicly display art, theater, writing or music produced by people living with dementia?

Can we reach out to a neighbor living with dementia, discern what brings him or her joy in the moment, and do it together?

Can we contribute financially to a local art museum or theater and ask them to develop an arts engagement program designed for people living with dementia?

Can we volunteer at a program like this?

Can we contact our celebrity or politician of choice and ask him or her to advocate for dementia-friendly communities?

Can we help our local coffee shop start an Alzheimer's Cafe?

Can we, in invigorating ways like these, and numerous ways yet to be discovered, join in the movement to redefine what it means to live with dementia in our communities? We can – with delight, and with ease.

This, together, is momentia. A new story told most compellingly and vividly by people living with dementia. A community transformation unfolding as the new story surges onward, leaving its tangible and joyful mark in our museums, parks, community centers, art galleries, stadiums and coffee shops. An irresistible invitation for us all to play a part in abundantly life-giving ways.

And through it all, we use the word to celebrate. The old dementia story has come to an end. The new dementia story is emerging. Momentia! Try saying it. It must, in fact, be exclaimed. The word springs from the lips, proclaiming, transforming, inviting. Momentia! There's a new dementia

story being told. It's a hopeful story, it's a triumphant story, and we're all a part of it. Momentia! We're not afraid anymore. We are celebrating. Because as dementia is on the rise, so is momentia!

There's a new dementia story being told, and we're all a part of it! We'd love to hear from you:

How is the new dementia story being told by people living with dementia in your community?

Where is the Momentia movement already emerging where you live, or what dementia-friendly community transformations would you love to see?

How are you already involved in redefining what it means to live with dementia in your community, or what small and delightful part would you love to play?

ChangingAging will be following the Momentia story worldwide as the movement unfolds. Share your stories by commenting below, [writing guest blog posts](#). Please visit [Momentia Seattle](#) on Facebook and subscribe to our Momentia mailing list for the latest news and updates on the new dementia story: Momentia!

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Marigrace Becker lives, works, and plays banjo in Seattle. She received her master's degree in social work, with a focus on aging and community organizing, from the University of Washington in 2010. Marigrace is thrilled to informally head up the newly developed Alzheimer's Services Coalition and is working with a team to develop Seattle Parks and Recreation's new "Dementia-Friendly Recreation" programs, dedicated to providing meaningful recreational opportunities for people living with dementia and their care partners.