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ENRICHING SENIOR LIVES

Lions Gate adopts Elite Comfort Matters® Care Program

Dementia can be daunting, but here's a remarkable fact: Even when other cognitive functions falter, the part of the brain responsible for experiencing "comfort" remains intact. This insight is invaluable for families navigating a dementia diagnosis. Despite memory challenges and difficulty recognizing loved ones, individuals can still derive comfort from their presence. Understanding this can guide caregivers in providing tailored support that targets the brain's "comfort receptor." This principle underpins the Comfort Matters® Care Program, which the Lions Gate memory care team is proudly adopting as the cornerstone of their approach. By embracing this acclaimed program, Lions Gate joins a select group of senior living communities committed to redefining standards in memory care excellence.

So, what is the Comfort Matters® Care Program and how does it better support our memory care residents? Tena Alonzo, director of Education & Research at Beatitudes

Campus, and a founding practitioner of the Comfort Matters® Care Program, has keen insights to share on the science behind the program and the results it garners.

"Caring for a loved one with dementia is a complex and emotional journey, and we wanted



DAVE THOMPSON
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to better support that journey by reimagining what memory care can be," said Tena. "In essence, research has shown that when quality of life is built around comfort, people live better. Through collaboration with families, doctors, and memory care specialists, we developed an approach to caregiving that decodes 'behaviors' to administer the means of comfort the

individual is seeking even when they can't verbally express their needs, wants, pain, or emotion. Our 26 years of research shows that when care is driven by comfort, we usually see a decrease in reliance on psychotropic medication to manage behaviors. That is really quite something. To be clear, not every memory care community has the bandwidth to execute the Comfort Matters® Care Program. It takes 12-15 months for a memory care community to reach our benchmark analytics and be fully accredited. Less than 1% of memory care communities in the country are accredited in the Comfort Matters® Care Program. Lions Gate is dedicated to becoming accredited in this elite care program, learning, changing, and deepening their already exceptional care to embrace practices that genuinely enhance life. As a faith-based community, Lions Gate is uniquely positioned to excel with the Comfort Matters® Care Program, embracing adaptations that speak to faith, culture, and traditions, all of which

directly contribute to a resident's personal experience of comfort."

What does the Lions Gate staff think of the Comfort Matters® Care Program? I asked Michelle Litwack, our Assisted Living nurse manager, for her insights. "The Comfort Matters® Care Program teaches us to look at behaviors as a communication tool instead of symptoms of the disease," said Michelle. "That is a groundbreaking change in thinking, and that new perspective is making a huge difference in how we administer care. We have always been focused on making residents comfortable, but by putting in the hard work to decode individual behaviors, we can provide a more nuanced comfort response that actually reaches the part of the brain that is active and engaged. Residents feel understood and loved even if their brain's processing capacity is diminished."

"The Lions Gate Comfort Matters® Care Program is so different from the care protocols in other memory care com-

munities," said Meredith Becker, Lions Gate COO. "Here, it's truly a village that cares for residents, with everyone contributing insights and ideas to accurately decode behaviors into meaningful communication. This care initiative challenges us to be even more innovative and intuitive about person-directed care. Families find that our new creative comfort model helps them connect with their family member in new and different ways. With dementia, a resident's capabilities are constantly changing, but there is always joy to be found in their company. We help everyone find comfort in the moment."

If your loved one is showing signs of memory loss, I want to reassure families we understand your worries. If you'd like to learn more about Lions Gate's Comfort Matters® Care Program, contact us for a visit. We'd be happy to give you a personal tour.

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