

REAL-LIFE STORY

When asked about her passion in life, Florence Maza beams, “I am an artist, it was not only my hobby and passion, but it was also my job.” She speaks fondly of her art, family and beloved husband of 63 years.

However, Florence recently faced a major challenge that has tested her emotionally. She made the transition from living alone in a large home in Pennsylvania to Sunrise Assisted Living of Leesburg to be closer to her family. “It has been difficult, it hasn’t been easy – but with help from everyone I will get through it,” she said.

Mary Ellen Knecht, RN and Nurse Liaison with The Medical Team refers to these challenges as “transitional trauma.”

Fortunately, the assisted living community where Florence resides utilizes a unique research-based program designed to assist families and individuals facing mental health and behavioral challenges. The Journey Behavioral Home Health Program was developed by The Medical Team with a nationally-recognized expert on psychiatric home care.

Providing solutions to the transitional challenges like those Florence has faced is just one of many behavioral aspects that it addresses. “When I learned about the Journey program, I was very interested in offering it to our residents, staff and families,” said Susan Balinge of Sunrise Assisted Living of Leesburg.

The program addresses a critical concern, as statistics show that over six million Americans over the age of sixty-five have



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some form of this emotional disorder, with nearly two million being clinically depressed.

Getting treatment is extremely important for individuals and families. According to the National Institute of Mental Health, only about 10 percent of seniors suffering from depression receive treatment. When treated, however, studies show that older patients respond well. A Pittsburgh Medical Center study found that 80 percent of seniors treated over a three-year period didn’t suffer recurrent bouts, while only 10 percent of those without treatment avoided relapse.

Knecht advised, “If you suspect that a loved one has behavioral health issues,

such as Alzheimer’s, depression or bipolar disorder, it’s important to talk with their physician as there are programs with proven outcomes available to help them.”

Balinge continued stating, “The Journey program has given us all support to help ease our residents through difficult situations.” The program has not only been instrumental in improving the lives of those living in senior care communities, but also homebound elders.

Based on her own experience, Florence offered up advice to others facing similar transitions saying, “Welcome all the help you can get, have an open mind, be courageous, and be thankful.” GRL



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