

Facilitator's Directions for The Nun Study and CNN Segment

The FACILITATOR may use the CNN segment with a group, by attaching an LCD projector to a laptop. This necessitates using a screen or blank wall.

The FACILITATOR welcomes the group and says: It is a fact of life that we often become forgetful in the aging process. This forgetfulness can sometimes be a sign of Alzheimer's disease. In 1987 when School Sisters of Notre Dame in Mankato were asked to be part of research studying Alzheimer's, many saw this as an educational opportunity, both for themselves and future generations. This research project is called The Nun Study. It is currently being continued by the University of Minnesota. The participants in the Nun Study are 678 School Sisters of Notre Dame who have been doing annual evaluations since 1992. They have also agreed to donate their brains to this research. As of February, 2010, 40 sisters out of 678 participants are still living..

The FACILITATOR asks: Do you know anyone who has Alzheimer's disease? Can you describe them before this illness? (Invite comments being especially sensitive to those naming loved ones who are ill.) The FACILITATOR continues: What made you realize that something was happening to your loved one? (Being forgetful, not connecting with humor as before, loss of simple abilities such as using the phone, losing things, etc.) How did you deal with this reality?

After all have shared The FACILITATOR focuses on the CNN segment and says: We'll view an eight minute segment on the Nun Study that appeared on CNN in March of 1997. As you listen try to name at least one thing we can do now to offset the possibility of getting Alzheimer's disease. (Turn on the LCD projector attached to a laptop and view the program.)

The FACILITATOR invites comments and says: Does the research of Dr. Snowdon and the School Sisters of Notre Dame tell us how we can offset the possibility of getting Alzheimer's?

Comments may include: healthy diet, exercise, no smoking, using one's mind by learning another language, reading, playing board games, crossword puzzles, being involved with other people, volunteering, meditation and prayer, belonging to a community that cares for the earth, caring for a pet, etc.

The FACILITATOR adds: Do you think sharing as we have done today is helpful? For any of you who are grieving the loss of a loved one to Alzheimer's, what has helped you continue to cope? Invite comments. If appropriate, The FACILITATOR says: Could you share how your faith has been a support in dealing with Alzheimer's?

The FACILITATOR concludes by saying: In 2001, TIME magazine pictured a School Sister of Notre Dame on the cover with the caption, "Believe it or not, this 91 years old nun can help you beat Alzheimer's..." May we deepen our commitment to engage the

aging process by developing a positive attitude and accepting our diminishment? With this in mind I'd like to conclude with the Serenity Prayer:

O God,

Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
The courage to change the things I can,
And the wisdom to know the difference.

Amen.