

BEST LIFE

Equipping teams to help elders living with dementia thrive

Imagine if you were labeled by only one word, and that word alone determined how the world treated you. The sum of your life experiences — relationships, skills, unique perspectives — would not matter. The complexity of what makes you unique as an individual would all be washed away by the one-dimensional perspective of that label. This is the reality for 85% of people living in long term care, who are defined by their diagnosis of dementia. This label focuses on what people can't do; on what's been lost.

Instead, what if each elder living with dementia was recognized as an individual, and care partners had the tools and understanding to help them achieve their best life? The Green House Project developed *Best Life* to help organizations support people with dementia to live a rich and rewarding life.

Fully integrated with The Green House model and philosophy, *Best Life* focuses on the holistic needs of each person living with dementia. Drawing from the premier thought leaders in the field, this innovative and cutting edge initiative empowers direct care staff to truly partner with those living with dementia. By equipping team members to identify and build on each elder's abilities, *Best Life* ensures your organization fulfills its mission to create meaningful life for all elders.



Strong Foundation in The Green House Model

Best Life is built on Green House core values of meaningful life, empowered staff and real home. These values have shifted the paradigm of elder care, addressed biases and deinstitutionalized thinking. They serve as the strong foundation for optimal and life-affirming memory care.

The vast majority of current dementia care focuses on managing “behaviors.” *Best Life* addresses the stigma of dementia head on, and explores the often-unrecognized biases that shape interactions with

elders living with dementia. *Best Life* helps direct care staff learn a whole new way to engage with each elder by focusing on the building blocks of culture, meaningful engagements and health and well-being.

“We feel equipped with tools to implement immediately, and also challenged to see people living with dementia in a new way. *Best Life* is an eye-opening experience.”

— Dolores Hughes, RN, M.Ed, The Woodlands at John Knox Village



Building Blocks of Success

CULTURE. Until there is a cure our best tool is culture. The prevailing perspective of dementia focuses predominantly on loss, debility and fear. This view has a detrimental effect on the elder’s quality of life, engagement, and well-being. *Best Life* creates an environment, a real home, that enhances the image of the elder and makes them a partner in their lives and their care. It is crucial to recognize that each elder living with dementia is a unique individual, and has the capability to feel love, friendship, and happiness.

MEANINGFUL ENGAGEMENTS. The deep knowing relationship between the staff and the elder supports a purposeful and engaged life, drawing on interests from the past and present. Meaningful Engagements dispel misperceptions about elders living with dementia by promoting connections with others in normal, respectful, and age-appropriate ways. Engagements go beyond passive ‘entertainment.’ By focusing on retained and emerging abilities and recognizing the right to make choices, elders can be themselves, try new things and take risks.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING. Partnering with an elder to create a state of optimal comfort, independence, and success is a central goal of *Best Life*. Health is a component of well-being, but well-being involves more than good health. By training staff in wellness techniques, elders can maintain their physical and cognitive abilities longer. For instance, people living with dementia often don’t have access to fresh air and exercise. These limitations not only restrict pleasure, but impact a good night’s sleep, positive mood, and mobility. *Best Life* recognizes the value of seeing the **whole** person, and the implications for quality of life.

“Many think it is the disease that causes us to withdraw, and to some extent I believe this is true. But, for many of us, we withdraw because we are not provided with meaningful opportunities that allow us to continue to experience joy, purpose and engagement in life.”

— Elder living with dementia

How It Works

Best Life approach is a comprehensive approach to memory care that helps staff to understand the complexities of dementia, to see each elder as a unique individual, and to connect them to an

engaged life. *Best Life* gives teams the tools and confidence to meet the changing needs of the elders living with dementia and create homes filled with dignity, purpose and love.

- **Education:** Core support for *Best Life* features a 3-day on-site educational program taught by a Green House Dementia Specialist, a 1-day intensive for Green House nurses and clinical support team members, and a train-the-trainer day.
- **Ongoing Support:** *Best Life* includes 12 months of support with telephone consultation, educational webinars and a peer network platform to ensure the continued growth of your teams and elders. Also included is the *Best Life* Integrity Assessment,

which provides a comprehensive assessment of your organization's alignment with *Best Life* principles

- **Family Integration:** Green House homes recognize that the involvement of family members of elders living with dementia are key to quality of life experiences Green House *Best Life* homes facilitate family learning and support through regularly scheduled educational and social events customized to the specific preferences of each home.



Leading The Way Again

Green House adopters embrace a leading edge approach to eldercare, blazing a trail for others to follow. Now is the time to lead the way again, addressing the stigma surrounding dementia, and creating a rich, meaningful life full of purpose, growth and joy for every elder. *Best Life* approach shows that your organization is focused on quality of life for those living with dementia. It is a strong statement to staff members, families, and elders alike that we are all valuable individuals, and no one can be diminished to a medical label.



DEVELOPER AND FACILITATOR:

Anne Ellett is a certified Nurse Practitioner (NP) with more than 20 years of experience in elder living and memory care, and

served as Sr. Vice President with Silverado Senior Living, an award-winning Assisted Living company specializing in dementia care. Currently, Anne is owner/CEO of Memory Care Support, LLC, a consulting firm working with senior housing professionals as they develop state-of-the-art health and wellness and memory care programs.



SHARLA LEE lived her life as a performer, and when she moved into The Green House home, that didn't need to change. She chose to serenade the elders in her home on piano each evening during dinner with her extensive songbook, played from memory. Sharla's personhood was celebrated, and she lived a good life with dementia. The goal of The Green House model and Best Life is to know the person ahead of the diagnosis, providing individualized care to meet their unique needs.



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