



Strengthening CONNECTIONS & WELLBEING:

THE BENEFITS OF SEMI-PRIVATE MEMORY CARE SUITES

Like food, air, water—human connections are essential to living a long, purpose-filled life. While relationships are a basic need for all humans, social connections for seniors with dementia or Alzheimer's are vital.

Our signature memory care program at MBK Senior Living communities, Connections for Living™, emphasizes supporting connections with residents, their loved ones, and team members. It's also why we believe there is a significant benefit to semi-private suites. Not only can shared suites be

more economical for families, but semi-private suites also offer up daily interactions that can profoundly affect seniors' health, happiness, and longevity.

"People want to be loved and have a purpose," said Crystal Roberts, Corporate Director of Resident Enrichment at MBK Senior Living. "Socialization can add years to your life, preserve cognitive function, reduce anxiety and depression, as well as provide several health benefits."

In an era of social distancing, it may seem contrary to consider a shared suite. However, when you consider all the infection control protocols and safeguards in place at MBK communities combined with care available around-the-clock and how many seniors seek companionship and comfort during a challenging time, it may not seem so absurd.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, MBK Senior Living's communities have followed the CDC, State, and County health agencies' recommendations. Plus, we instituted more than 20 additional protocols of our own to manage the coronavirus crisis.

Some of those protocols include:

- using an electro-static disinfectant sprayer to clean and disinfect common areas regularly
- monitoring residents and team members daily for signs and symptoms and take temperatures twice daily
- conducting random testing to mitigate the potential spread of the virus
- reminding residents and team members to wear a mask in public, maintain proper social distance, and wash their hands regularly.

While efforts to keep the virus out of our communities is top of mind, what residents and their families appreciate day-to-day is MBK Senior Living's memory care programming. The Connections for Living by MBK™ program provides the infrastructure for residents and families to find pivotal connections, support, and guidance – and even more so for residents who choose semi-private suites.

Our Connections for Living programming is built on the scientific fact that on-going social interactions can lead to a sharper mind, improved health, and a greater sense of belonging.

"We had two residents who had similar life histories. In addition to common backgrounds, hobbies, and interests, both had long marriages and were recently widowed," said Roberts. "We paired them in a semi-private suite where they found new meaning and purpose in caring for each other."

"But you just can't partner anyone," said Roberts. "That's why we go through a thorough and extensive discovery process with each resident."

Before moving in, Connections for Living team members conduct in-depth interviews with the residents and their families to understand their physical and medical needs and learn about their upbringing and backgrounds and lifelong hobbies, passions, and interests. This information is then shared with all community team members who interact with the resident. The knowledge gained helps define a day-to-day guide of how to read resident cues for communications and care needs. It also allows caregivers to support residents' behavioral issues and uncover the best ways to communicate with residents' loved ones to ensure they are also well cared for along the way.

The discovery process doesn't stop at the move-in. MBK Senior Living's Connections for Living team members are specially trained in dementia care and interaction processes and continue connecting with residents daily. This helps to recognize that behavior equals communication and validates the resident's reality, allowing residents to feel engaged and secure.

"Our Connections for Living programming is built on the scientific fact that on-going social interactions can lead to a sharper mind, improved health, and a greater sense of belonging," added Roberts.

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Study results show that socially-engaged seniors had lower levels of interleukin-6. This inflammatory factor is linked to age-related disorders, including Alzheimer's disease,

osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis, cardiovascular disease, and even some forms of cancers. Social isolation and loneliness can lead to a higher risk for morbidity and mortality, elevated blood pressure, and increased stress and depression.

"But it's not just the residents that benefit from semi-private suites. We often hear from residents' family members how they also feel alone and overwhelmed by the effects of dementia on their

loved one," said Roberts. "However, through semi-private suites, families often develop deep-seeded kinship over shared experiences and challenges, and provide a solid support system for each other."

"We have residents and families who value privacy and don't want to share living space – we honor that too, and they absolutely benefit from a variety of connections and support offered through Connections for Living programming," said Roberts. "However, at the end of the day, semi-private suites are a wonderful option and provide you with a choice."

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