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Kae Hammond recalls the day her mother asked to go home -- although she was already in the home she shared with her husband for years.

After time, however, Hammond learned how to deal with her mother's sporadic and often frustrating behavior -- and she wants to help others who may be going through the same thing.

Hammond is the founder of La Quinta-based ALZ Life Matters, a professional services organization that focuses on supporting Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers.

"What I discovered as a caregiver is as much as you think you know, and even if you've read a few books, nothing really prepares for it," she said. "So my intention is to help caregivers get a much clearer understanding about what's going on with their loved one and make it as manageable of a journey as possible."

Hammond hosts ongoing workshops that aim to teach caregivers about the various steps and conditions that Alzheimer's and dementia patients go through as the disease progresses.

"The reality is that it's not the person you know, it's the person with Alzheimer's," Hammond said. "They live in the present and what's in front of them and you have to learn to live in the present, too."

Sauni Hawes of Rancho Mirage, who is a caregiver for her mother Jeanne, said ALZ Life Matters greatly helped her cope with what she called a painful dilemma.

"I walked away a different person because of the information I was able to learn from Kae's workshops," Hawes said. "I learned to let go of the mother who raised me because that's not the person she is anymore. I was trying to correct her and bring her back to my reality and now I've learned to let her be in her own reality."

For Maria Renoos of La Quinta, ALZ Life Matters also assisted in helping deal with the situation while keeping her stress level down.

"This is a 24-7 job," Renoos said of caring for her husband Norman who was diagnosed with dementia nearly three years ago. "So I learned you have to go with the flow. You can't snap at them when they do something you think isn't right. You have to calmly talk to them about it or distract them because otherwise it just makes things worse."

The most pressing reason Hammond decided to share her knowledge with others is because she discovered a staggering statistic that 70 percent of caregivers die before their loved ones because of the high-stress they experience, she said.

"In the desert, it's a really critical issue," Hammond said.

In Riverside County alone, more than 30,000 people are living with some form of dementia, according to officials the Alzheimer's Association's Coachella Valley regional office.

"ALZ Life Matters is a direct result of my own personal experience as a caregiver for my mother," Hammond said.

"It's very important to be able to talk to somebody who has been on that journey and continues to be on that journey and that's the forum I'm trying to provide."

More information

ALZ Life Matters is a professional services organization that focuses on supporting Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers.

ALZ Life Matters provides ongoing workshops through the Coachella Valley.

For more information, visit [www.alzlifematters.com](http://www.alzlifematters.com).

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**Abstract** (Document Summary)

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supporting Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers. More information ALZ Life Matters is a professional services organization that focuses on supporting Alzheimer's and dementia caregivers.

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