



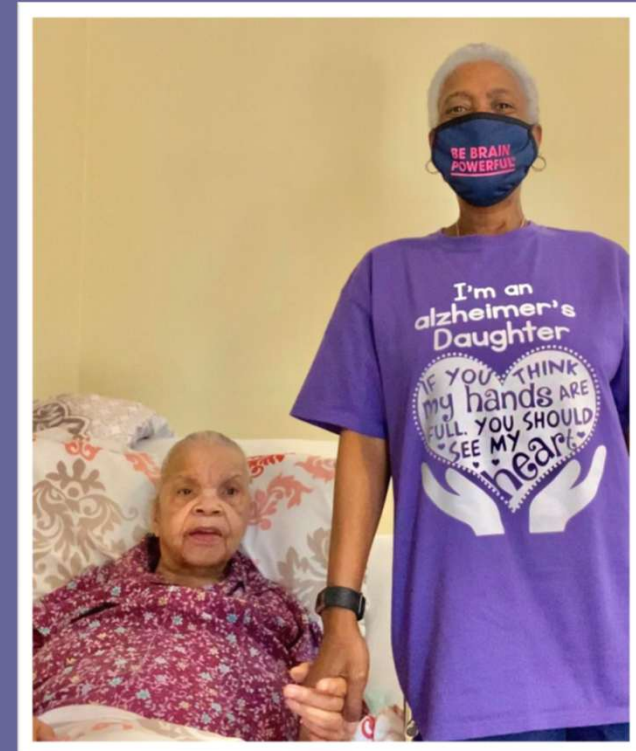
NORTHERN VIRGINIA
dementia care
consortium

Putting the Puzzle Pieces Together
Using LEGO® Serious Play®
2025 NVDDCC Conference!
November 22, 2025

Loretta Woodward Veney

Session Objectives

- I. Our Journey with LEGO bricks!
- II. Introduction to LEGO Serious Play for Caregivers
- III. Finding the Missing Piece
- IV. Putting all the Pieces Together



Our 16-year Family Journey

- My Mom Doris was diagnosed with dementia in 2006 at age 77.
- We tackled her disease one day at a time, ensuring we shared lots of Joy!
- Our journey ended on January 31, 2022, three weeks before her 93rd Birthday.
- I'm continuing our legacy in Mom's memory!



Health & Science

How Alzheimer's turned a daughter into her mom's mom

By Kristen Hartke



Alzheimer's turned a daughter into her mom's mom. Doris Woodcock, 93, of Washington, Md., was diagnosed with dementia in 2006. She and her daughter, Kristin, are walking together. Photo: Kristin Woodcock.

How Our Life with LEGO Evolved!

- LEGO became a part of our lives in 1964 and remained so for more than 50 years.
- Building with LEGO kept Mom calm and engaged and eliminated the need for any meds to control behavioral issues.
- In 2014 when she no longer remembered who I was, I became a certified **LEGO® Serious Play®** facilitator to keep our communication and engagement alive.



The Many Caregiver Roles Can Definitely be Puzzling!

- * You're a Medical Advocate
- * You're a Medication Manager
- * You're a Personal Care Assistant
- * Nutritionist and Meal Preparer
- * You're a Companion and Emotional Support
- * You're a Financial & Legal Manager
- * You're a Household Manager
- * You're a Transportation Coordinator
- * You're a Care Team Communicator



Juggling all those roles can be ...

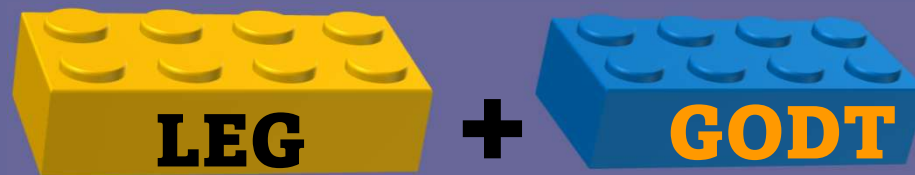
Exhausting and
Overwhelming



**Let's see if LEGO can help
put all the pieces together!**

The LEGO Group's Story

- Created by Ole Kirk Kristiansen in Denmark in 1932 but company wasn't named until 1935.
- LEGO is the combination of two Danish words



which in English means to “PLAY WELL”!

Four Components of LEGO Serious Play



LSP
ensures
everyone
is included
& ALL
voices are
heard.





**This isn't just a
yellow LEGO brick...
It symbolizes the
Joy and Hope in
Caregiving**

LEGO Serious Play
is based on



**Metaphors unlock our imagination!
There are no right or wrong answers!**

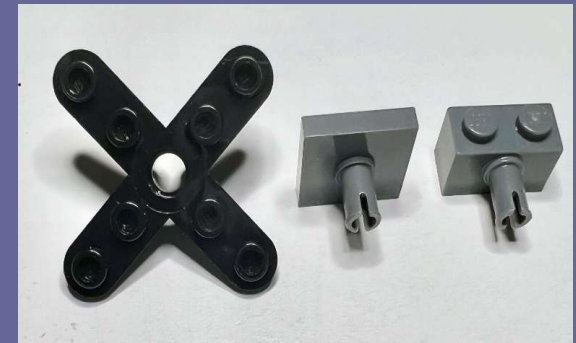
**Your bricks become whatever
you say they are...**

It's time to open your LEGO bricks!

There are two minifigures in the kit.



The windmill piece spins when
connected to either of the two pieces
that has a pole sticking out of it.



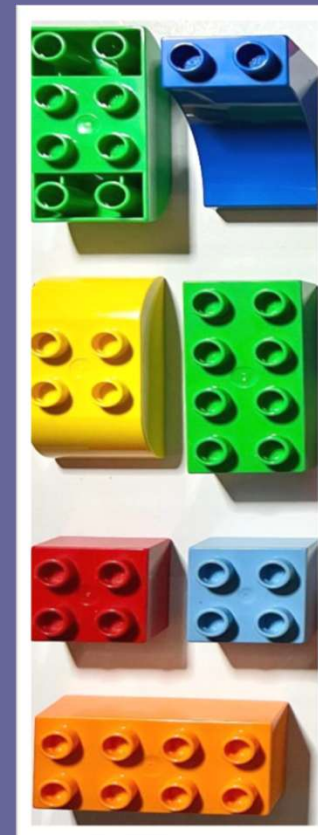
Everyone's favorite piece in the kit is
the heart.



The Kit has at least one larger DUPLO brick!

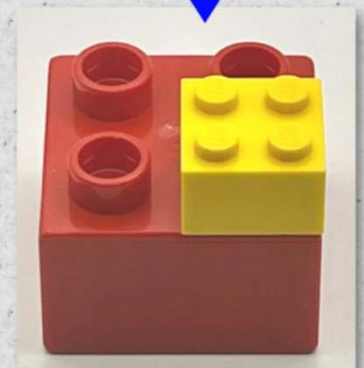
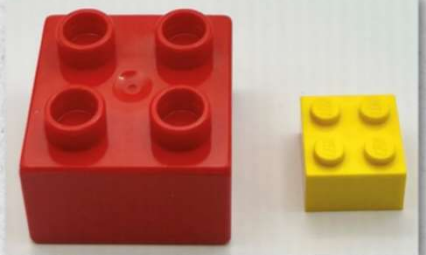
These pieces may be easier to handle and use for some people.

The LEGO and DUPLO bricks can be used together!

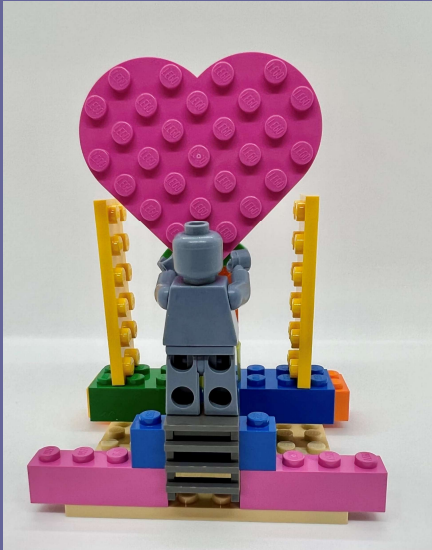


Both types of bricks work together!

DUPLO 2x2 LEGO 2x2



Exploring your Bricks with a Warm-Up Task!



We are going to start with something simple!!

#1 Rule - Think with your hands!! Our hands are connected to many of the neurons in our brains, so when we use our hands and minds together great things happen!

Build a bridge between you and the person you care for.

You have two minutes - Ready, Set GO!!

**Build a bridge between you
and the person you care for!**



2:00



1:00



Great job!
Take a photo of your
Bridge Masterpiece!



Recap Our Bridges!
Next Up: Finding the Missing Piece in
Caregiving

Task #1 - Build a model that represents ONE MISSING PIECE you need to be the best caregiver you can be!

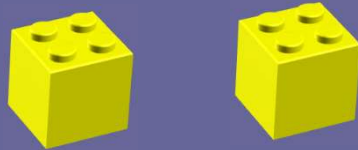


- Don't think too much about the task, just start building!
- Think with your hands!

**Build Task #1 - Build a model that
represents one missing piece you need to
be the best caregiver you can be!**



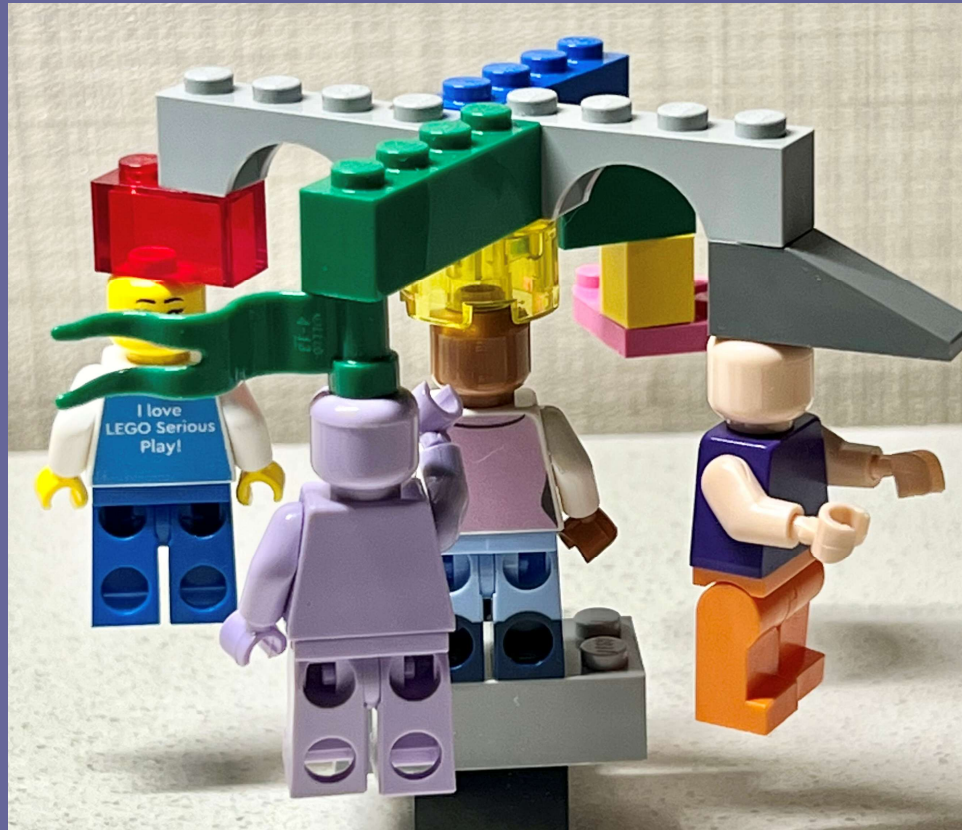
3:00



2:00



1:00



Great job! Take a photo of your model!

Sharing Your Build With Your Group!

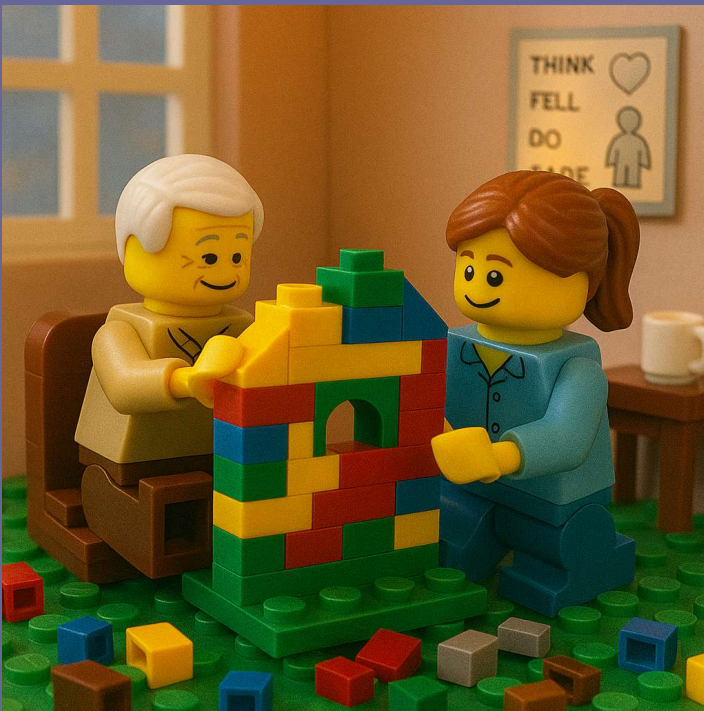


Tell your story of the
missing piece that
you need!

Being a Caregiver requires Resilience!

**Resilience is defined as
our ability to withstand
or to recover quickly
from difficulties;
toughness**

Task #2 - Build a model that represents an example of how you put the pieces back together after something fell apart!

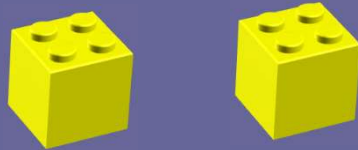


- Don't think too much about the task, just start building!
- Think with your hands!

**Build Task #2 - Build a model that represents
an example of how you put the pieces back
together after something fell apart!**



3:00



2:00



1:00

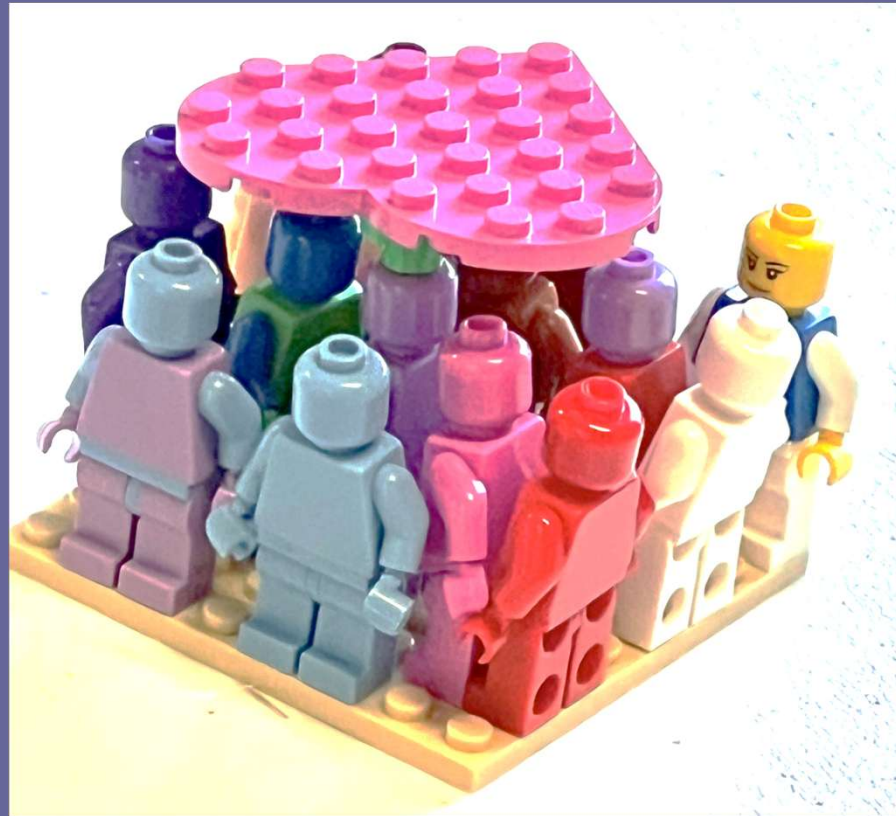


Great job! Take a photo of your model!

Sharing Your Build With Your Group!



Tell your story of how
you put the pieces
back together!



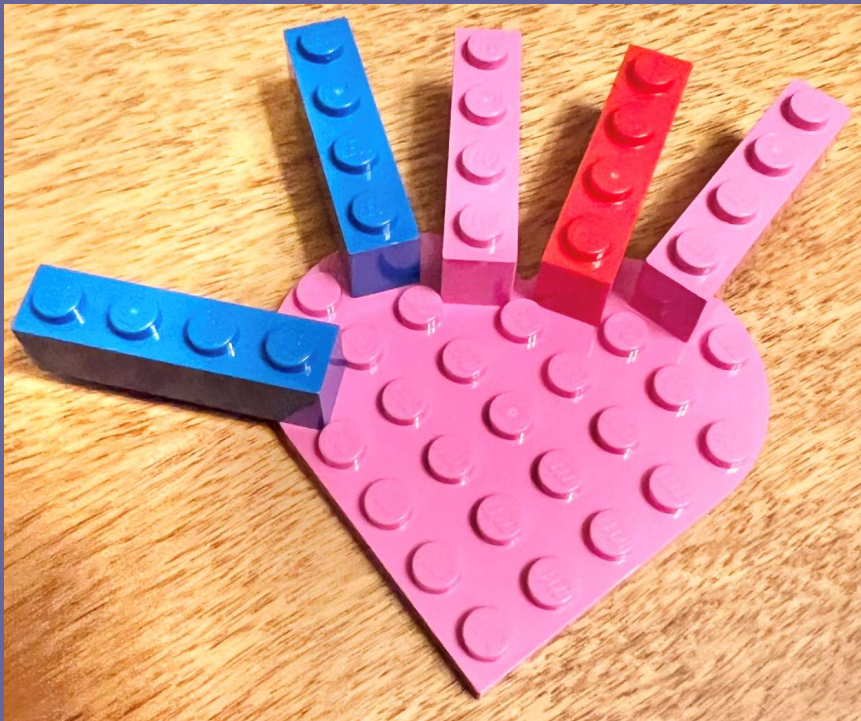
Recap and Reflection!

Great Strategies for putting all the Puzzle Pieces Together in Caregiving!

- **Listening Actively** – giving our FULL attention, make eye contact, listening with patience and empathy
- **Using Meaningful Touch** – holding hands, gentle hugs, or reassuring touch communicates warmth & security
- **Sharing Memories** – “Remember that time....”, looking at old photos, and reminiscing together strengthens bonds
- **Respecting Dignity** – Involve care receivers in decisions & respect their preferences
- **Using Gentle Language** – Speak with kindness, try to avoid showing frustration even in challenging situations

- **Including Non-Verbal Communication** – Smiles, eye contact, and body language can convey love beyond words.
- **Allowing Time to Respond** – When the person has cognitive decline allow space for slow responses.
- **Honoring Preferences** – Integrate favorite music, food and activities that bring joy into daily life.
- **Encouraging Expression** – Find ways to reduce isolation and boredom to remain healthy and hopeful!
- **Celebrating All Wins** – Recognize every achievement that brought great joy! Like completing PT, walking a mile or cooking a healthy meal. Recognize and celebrate individual needs, preferences and values of older adults that bring joy!

Homework Assignment - Build a model that represents the top strategy you want to implement to help you keep all the pieces together!



- Don't think too much about the task, just start building!
- Think with your hands!



Final Reflection and Event Recap!

Thank You for participating in Putting All the Puzzle Pieces Together!

My Mom will always be my greatest inspiration, and I'll continue our legacy by helping others make memories with LEGO bricks!

- 1) LEGO play can inspire and uplift you!
- 2) Set aside time to build at least once a week. Take photos of what you build!
- 3) Keep Building! Continue putting all the caregiving pieces together!

