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Creating Joy And Meaning For The Dementia Patient: A Caregiver's Guide To Connection And Hope



Synopsis

According to recent estimates, more than five million Americans suffer from dementia or Alzheimer's disease, a number predicted to grow as Baby Boomers continue to age. Although staggering, these statistics only tell half of the story. As caregivers are thrust into situations they never could have predicted, the emotional, physical, and financial strains are enormous and cannot be overestimated. As the number of dementia patients continues to increase, so will the number of caregivers searching for answers and advice. *Creating Joy and Meaning for the Dementia Patient* offers a positive and innovative approach to dementia care that focuses on the caregiver's power to create an atmosphere of joy and peace for both the patient and themselves, breathing fresh air into the topic of dementia care. As the disease progresses, the patient's world grows smaller and smaller. Time for them no longer consists of weeks, days, or even hours. Eventually their cognitive life is reduced to small increments of time, mere moments of memory. By understanding this and seeing the world through the eyes of a sufferer, the caregiver is better able to create an environment of mutual joy and contentment. Based on ten years of caregiving experience, the techniques offered here honor the patient's individuality, interests, and previous accomplishments. This approach is fresh and inspirational, and recounts a personal journey, filled with relatable experiences that readers will find uplifting and brimming with hope. It teaches family members and other caregivers how to stay connected with their loved one for as long as possible. But most importantly, it honors the unique individual that still resides deep inside every dementia patient by offering techniques enabling them to continue to experience the simple joys of everyday life.

Book Information

Hardcover: 234 pages

Publisher: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers; 1 edition (May 16, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1442227559

ISBN-13: 978-1442227552

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 0.9 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (7 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #710,115 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #79 in [Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Allied Health Services > Caregiving](#) #106 in [Books > Health,](#)

Customer Reviews

The role of a caretaker, particularly that of one in the throes of Alzheimer's or other serious dementias, can be an extremely stressful and daunting one. It's a role that if one had to choose, most would walk away from, most likely run. The emotional roller coaster of Ronda Parsons' life was evident, but instead of riding it in fear, she decided to find joy in her journey. She prefaces Nan's story, for it is ultimately hers, by stating that dealing with a severe dementia was a "demanding reality that can bring the most loving caretaker to their emotional breaking point." Ronda's and Nan's journey was penned in a comforting, almost lyrical manner, but I saw flashes of anger, frustrations, if not tears in certain situations. For Ronda, as with many people I know, it was one of those "someone has to do it moments" when she took over responsibility for her mother-in-law's care. Her beloved Nan has "lost her ability to connect the dots," a task that now shifted to others. For Ronda the realization that helping and watching "someone you love slowly change and slip away is unfathomably sad and frightening." What could have continued to be a desperate situation somehow became one of joy. For anyone who has ever received a call from a nursing home or other care facility asking for assistance in controlling or calming a loved one can make one's heart turn to stone. I've been the recipient of some of those and my heart sank as I read a brief recounting of one. Ronda's recounting of their journey was a pensive one for me, but also a learning experience. It altered the way I looked at the treatment, the caretaker, and someone like Nan, a "gentle soul seated in a Geri-Chair." It wasn't a book that I was planning on racing through, although it would have been an easy task.

Virginia author Ronda Parsons has pursued a career in sales management and sales training. When her mother-in-law Nan was diagnosed with dementia, Ronda became her caregiver, at first frustrated with the idiosyncrasies of advancing dementia and gradually finding a path into those moments of lucidity and finding ways to make the last years of Nan happy ones. The ways in which she accomplished this, often by trial and error, Ronda shares with us in this radiantly beautiful book - a book that should be in the library of every household, awaiting the time (likely inevitable) when a family member may be struck with this disease. As the very reality oriented Ronda states in her introduction, "This is not a technical manual about dementia and Alzheimer's disease. I'll leave the neurological changes and drug therapies to the experts. No, this is a book about the person that still

lives inside each dementia patient and specific activities that allow them to once again experience the beauty of being alive. To give this gift to someone you love is a blessing beyond words and a joy indescribable.' It is the sharing method Ronda employs that makes this beautifully written book so generously helpful for all of us who may be one day either the patient or the caregiver. She explains dementia in words that the lay person understands, talks us through the process of the disease, and in doing so makes us more sensitive to the techniques of providing a life of hope and happiness for the dementia patient. `Like most dementia suffers, Nan's behavioral and mental changes seemed to progress in fits and starts. She had periods when her symptoms would advance in a whirl of acceleration and then they would level off for a few months, or as in one instance, a year.

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