
Understanding What It's Like To Live With Alzheimer's

Who are you?



Lisa Mildon (/user/@lisamildon)
Feb 28, 2017

Those three words send shivers down my spine. Dread fills my mind from the inevitable scenario when my dad no longer knows who I am.

Nearly six years ago, we received the heartbreaking news that my dad had Alzheimer's disease. It wasn't a big surprise. On my father's side of the family, Alzheimer's is fairly common. My grandfather, two great-uncles and two uncles had Alzheimer's or some form of dementia. I remember as a teen seeing my grandpa with this vacant stare most of the time. There were moments when I could see that mischievous twinkle in his eyes and that boyish grin; those were his good days when he was more cognizant. As his condition worsened, he did not recognize anyone or know his surroundings. Becoming a stranger in his own home, he became belligerent. Seeing this once robust man reduced to a fearful, overgrown child was heartrending.

What it's Like To Dance With Sports Stars (<http://www.powr.com/video/what-its-like-to-dance-with-spor...>)



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According to the Alzheimer's Association (<http://www.alz.org/facts/>), every 60 seconds someone in the U.S. develops Alzheimer's. An estimated five million Americans are living with it, and it's the sixth leading cause of death. These facts are scary, and I can only imagine what my dad is thinking.

I'm certain the events of my grandpa's fight with Alzheimer's replay like a bad YouTube video in my father's mind. The knowledge of how his future will play out, like his dad's, most assuredly made him decide not to reveal his diagnosis to my brother and me until a few years ago.

Even then he couldn't say the word Alzheimer's, only confessing that he was having memory problems. But after this last trip to the hospital, I knew the truth as the nurse rattled off his medications. My dad just lay on the bed looking helpless and embarrassed. All I could muster was a weak, knowing smile on my face as I patted his leg. Staring back at me with his deep blue eyes was a man stricken with fear and helplessness. How do you comfort someone who has been your rock, your rough and tough John Wayne type of figure in your life? My instincts took over. I did the only thing I knew. I told him I'd always be there for him no matter what happened. I told him how much I loved him; I hugged him.

I figured my love and support is all I have to offer, but for this long road ahead, it will have to be enough. As I prepare for those good days versus bad days, I've educated myself. Gratefully, my dad still knows most of those close to him. However, I am starting to see cracks in his tough guy exterior. Occasionally, he blanks on what he was about to do or say. He's even gotten confused about parking his beloved fifth-wheel camper, something he's done hundreds of times.

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I think the hardest thing I've witnessed is on his off days when he sounds like a young, frightened boy on the phone. His voice is much higher, he speaks rapidly and seems scattered in his thoughts. I could tell things weren't connecting, but I deal with them by smoothing those rough edges so he maintains his dignity. We speak frankly with each other, but at times like these I add extra gentleness to our conversation. He doesn't need my judgement or correction, only my love and acceptance.

I'm playing the parental role more. I'm the stronger one while giving him gentle guidance and reassurance that I'm not going to leave him in his time of need. This may sound noble, but I wasn't prepared to become the adult in my father-daughter relationship. I've had to come to terms with this illness, too. I've cried a river full of tears for not only his loss (and losses to come) but my loss of the familiar and strong safety net I call dad.

For now, each day is a gift to us. He wakes up still knowing who I am. I wake up knowing my father is still with me. I know it is only a matter of time when I become the unfamiliar woman visiting and calling every day. I feel that blank stare coming and that eventual question ... *who are you?*

To All The Nurses In The Making

We tell ourselves that one day it'll all pay off, but will it actually?



Kaylee O'Neal (/user/@onealkaylee)
Mar 29, 2017

But you're taking a break from studying right now just to read this, aren't you? Either at the library with friends or in your dorm room. Wherever you may be, you never get the chance to put your books down, at least that's how it feels to most of us. It sucks feeling like you've chosen the hardest major in the world, especially when you see other students barely spending any time studying or doing school work. The exclamation "You're still here!" is an all too frequent expression from fellow students after recognizing that you've spent 10-plus hours in the library. At first it didn't seem so bad and you told yourself "This isn't so difficult. I can handle it." but fast-forward a few months and you're questioning

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Life Is Like Calculus, You Can't Skip The Fundamental Steps

Calculus is hard. Life is hard.



Tishtrya Cama (/user/@txcama)

Aug 21, 2018

You know what is hard? Calculus. It involves numbers, symbols, letters, strategies and formulas. You can't learn it overnight and I assure you if you try the night before an exam it won't end up being a very good day for you. Calculus takes time, commitment, attention, and a little bit of spark for that "ah ha" moment to ring in your head. Once you have it down, you feel confident and all the new challenges that come along with problems and solutions just makes sense and they become easier to work out because you took the steps to actually understand it. You can't learn multiplication and division without addition and subtraction. You just can't. You can't skip those fundamental steps and still learn

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