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Alzheimer's wife: lessons learned (special session)



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My husband had Alzheimer's and I was his caregiver for 10 years. During that time I have learned many lessons - both while I cared for him and after his death. These are my survival lessons to share. Alzheimer's caregiving is a lonely place. How do you come to terms with the disease yourself, and then try to make the right decisions for your ill spouse -- medical, social, financial decisions. How do you honor the patient's wishes? Take care of yourself? Help others to help you? The answers aren't the same for everyone, but options can help. You must figure out when it's time to tell others and when you must be the family decision maker. Key factors for me were, understanding his perceptual changes, visions, hallucinations, and loss of direction. I wrote a blog, saw an elder care lawyer, adopted a dog, tried (but failed) to put my spouse in resident placement. Most important was my network of supportive friends. Completely exhausted by the 8th year, my unusual solution was finding a caregiver who moved in with his young family. It was an alternate style of life, but one that worked well for all of us. We created a new support structure. In this way, I survived.

Biography

Nancy D Broz has obtained her BA degree in English from Ursinus College, MA degree from Rowan University in Supervision and Curriculum and an EdD degree from Temple University in English Education. She worked as a Teacher and Administrator in the Moorestown, NJ Public schools until 2005, has taught for Rutgers University, Temple University and is now an adjunct Professor for Fairleigh Dickinson University. She has also been a language arts Consultant for 30 years.

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