

FORGET-ME-NOT SPOTLIGHT

WHEN A FAMILY MEMBER HAS DEMENTIA

By Susan M. McCurry

Review by Shannon Nosbisch, co-founder of Effingham Area Alzheimer's Awareness

DEMENTIA CAREGIVING IS HARD!! That is the title of the first section of this book and an accurate statement. Dementia, including Alzheimer's disease, presents a variety of challenges to caregivers. Besides the memory issues, most people with dementia develop behavior problems that make caregiving even harder. Unfortunately, no two individuals have the same behavior problems or at a specific stage of the disease. Also, the disease causes an ever-changing situation. You resolve one problem and then a new one appears! On one day you may be able to diffuse a situation, but the next day the same solution may not work. In this book, Ms. McCurry helps you develop creative and respectful solutions individualized to your unique situation. She wants you to not only survive being a caregiver, but to thrive as you care for someone who needs you.

In the first chapter, she discusses "resilience". Resilience is defined as elasticity, "the power or ability to return to the original form...after being bent, compressed, or stretched." Ms. McCurry adapts this to caregiving: "resilience is adaptation-an ability to accommodate, and to keep moving and trying new strategies in response to constantly changing circumstances." Throughout the book, resilience is the underlying message she wants the caregiver to learn.

In section two, Ms. McCurry uses the acronym D.A.N.C.E. for the five core principles that resilient caregivers have taught her over the years of her practice. It stands for:

D – Don't argue

A – Accept the disease

N – Nurture your physical and emotional health

C - use Creative problem solving

E - Enjoy the moment with your loved one

For each of these principles, there is a chapter that goes into more depth explaining them. Interspersed throughout the book are situations that real life caregivers have dealt with and their solutions. I think the Pleasant Events Schedule for Alzheimer's Disease Patients will be helpful to many caregivers.

THE PROMISE: YOU CAN DO IT!! is the title of the last section. In this section, Ms. McCurry talks about the three secrets that will help you to not become overwhelmed and give up on becoming a more resilient caregiver. She believes that caregivers who learn to D.A.N.C.E. with the person they are caring for will become more resilient-able to recover from or adjust to change, and be more able to face difficulties and challenges.

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