

My Happy Book

A Wonderful Idea from Cynthia Guzman
by Kristin Einberger



Cynthia Guzman was diagnosed with dementia on her 63rd birthday. Over the course of four years, with continuing research and information, she was given a diagnosis of Lewy Body Dementia. Cynthia has advocated for those with the various forms of dementia as well as their caregivers ever since her diagnosis four years ago. Much of this advocacy has been done through the [Alzheimer's Association](#). They have given Cynthia a voice, an audience, and a purpose in life. She was fortunate to serve as an Early Stage Advisor

for the Association for a year. Cynthia traveled to Washington, D.C. for the 4th year in a row in April of this year, 2016, to speak with legislators during the National Advocacy Forum. Congressman Mike Thompson (D-CA) was so impressed with Cynthia's work that he named her as [Woman of the Year in Napa County](#).



It is Cynthia's main purpose in life to make the journey easier for those diagnosed with dementia as well as their caregivers, and to work tirelessly to advocate for an end to the disease so that future generations will live in a world without Alzheimer's/dementia. Cynthia recently shared her idea for a Happy Book with me and we wanted to pass along this idea in the hopes that it will bring some moments of joy to others:

One very special Thanksgiving celebrating with family and friends at my son's house, I took quite a few photos, hoping to remember this wonderful day. Later, I put them all in a book. When I looked at the book later that day, it brought back wonderful memories and made me feel so good. I continue to look at this book often. I add photos that are important to me, that make me happy, that bring joy to my life. I'm choosy about the photos as I want them to all be the most special – people and events that make me happy now and that can be used by those around me as my disease progresses to share with me.



I got to thinking – if a simple book like this makes me so happy, it would surely do the same for others dealing with dementia. It's an easy thing to put together and the rewards can be huge. It is a visual reminder of good memories. Not only can

it be used for the person with dementia, but it can also be a great tool in so many ways for caregivers and friends. During visits, they can use it to spark conversation and increase feelings of happiness between the person being cared for and the caregiver or friend. It can be a visual reminder of important people in the person's life. It can also be used for caregivers – family or facility - struggling to take care of the person's daily needs such as showering and dressing as it visually provides good feelings and can make the job at hand easier to perform.

I hope that you will consider making your very own "Happy Book." Don't make it too big or it becomes too difficult to hold. I have found that one that is 5 x 7 or 6 x 8 is the perfect size. Be sure to put them in plastic as this will allow them to be looked at over and over. Again, I recommend putting only your favorite photos in your book. For caregivers, you might consider adding favorite scents such as citrus or lavender to the book so that not only will there be visual memories but those of smell also. This should be a very personal book, focusing on what makes you happy. I hope that your book will have as positive impact on your life as it has on mine. Enjoy!!!

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Cynthia Guzman

Do you have an idea that you would like to share with others? If so, please [email us](#) and we will publish your ideas in future editions of the Online Dementia Journal.