

The Right Support Counts

*A Response to Every Minute Counts, a documentary
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When we think about dementia and its impact on those affected by it, the scope is all-encompassing. This was demonstrated in the documentary [Every Minute Counts](#) that recently aired on PBS. Everyone is affected by dementia, whether we are living with personal brain change, loving or caring for someone with brain change, providing dementia training and education, or advocating for quality of life and research for a cure. If you are not personally involved in one of these ways that dementia affects our lives, you will be affected by the social stigma that says someone's life is less than if you are living with dementia. Because when we think of someone's life as less than ours, we all suffer. When we focus on loss rather than life, we all lose. Brain change can have a very big impact on our life, and so can hope. The question is, what do we hope for and where do we choose to place our energy? We believe that "Until there's a cure, there's care." Positive Approach[®] to Care focuses on giving a voice to people living with dementia and their care partners, providing quality education and skills training, and helping communities work on being able to promote life.

There are many positive possibilities for someone living with dementia and their families if they are given support, guidance, education, and resources to help the person living with dementia live a full and joyful life. The documentary did show the stress of having dementia in the family, however, it did not show what is possible with dementia. While it is true is that many families do not know anything about dementia until they are told that their loved one has it, and they do not know who to turn to or where to get the kind of education and resources to promote life with brain change, there are resources that provide this. While the documentary did show a facility that provides care for people living with dementia, it did not promote and encourage advocacy to ask the establishments that give care to provide their staff with the tools, education, skills, and a professional wage to help people living with dementia live well. Should we be paying for chandeliers or for professionals who are skilled and well paid for their expertise in hands-on care?

The fact that a cure is necessary, hoped for, and important is true. What is also true is that people living with dementia and their loved ones are able to live with a quality of life that is dependent upon promoting care with, and not for, the person living with brain change. Providing education, awareness, and skill for both family and professional care partners, having facilities and organizations that offer skilled care, offering support for people living with dementia and their families, providing a voice for people living with dementia, and creating facilities that enable someone living with dementia to be engaged and active in their life allows people to live life well right now while we strive to find a cure. Dementia does change the way that someone lives, but it will never be able to rob someone of their dignity or devalue their life, only we can do that. When we look at the landscape of dementia in our country, as the documentary asked us to do, we can choose to see something dark and bleak or something very different. Yes, a cure is what we all hope for but for now there is care, and what that care looks like and how it promotes quality of life is up to us.