

Words of Encouragement

by Anne Fergusson,
PAC Core Team

At 48 years old, I found myself sitting nervously in the University of California, San Francisco neurology department talking with a doctor. I was a registered nurse with a BS degree. Six months earlier, I was working, and after three months I was fired. I found a new opportunity, and was working again at a different facility, but after three months I was fired again. I was in denial but not for long because my worst dreams were coming true.

Something was familiar with this place. I met my father here with my mother about ten years earlier. He was diagnosed with subcortical gliosis, now known as FrontoTemporal Dementia. After the doctor's appointment, we sat in the hospital cafeteria and I remember feeding him in a catatonic state with food drooling out the sides of his mouth. Now I was sitting here and was told I have FTD. What do I do now? They gave me three to five years to live. Then I would probably be drooling food out of my mouth.

As it turns out, I am unable to work as a nurse anymore, but I am going on eleven years from that day in the doctor's office. Between several drugs to modify my behavior and counseling, things went from bad to worse. I was living in a world between homicide and suicide. I got a new psychiatrist and I am now down to two meds, and managing life much better. If you have been given a death sentence and it didn't turn out as expected, I want to encourage you to "reinvent" your life. That is what I did. Rediscover yourself and what you are able to still do. I now volunteer at a local library once a week and I started writing books with my latest in publication. Other ideas might include something with art or music. Join an internet group or a prayer chain. Or maybe a book club. I discovered a support group with the local Alzheimer's Association for early onset any kind of dementia. We help each other. Changing the focus from yourself and start helping someone else will make a difference in your "reinvented life." Good Luck!

Anne Fergusson has a BS degree in nursing. In 2005, she was diagnosed with FrontoTemporal Dementia. She is married and has identical twin boys that are both medical doctors.