

Keep the Connection

A Meditation

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We are hard wired to be in relationships with one another. I once read that loneliness increases our odds of dying early by 45%. This does not change when we are diagnosed with dementia. And when one of our family members is diagnosed with dementia, the entire family is affected. We are affected emotionally, physically, financially, and spiritually. Some of this comes directly from the brain changes but some comes from the response of those around us. I have felt this isolation first hand, because I am one of those family members and friends affected by the diagnosis of a loved one. Isolation is being marginalized, living outside of meaningful relationships and it can happen when someone is living with dementia. It is a dark and lonely place. After all, we use isolation for the most powerful of punishment, and it is the antithesis of what nurtures and sustains life. I begin our meditation this month with these comments in hope they make us stop and take a moment to realize just how important we are to bring light and connection to someone's life.

When my mother was living with dementia, I understood the significance of being in her presence and staying connected to her, and as I have gathered friends living with dementia I am often reminded of this truth. I recently went to a speaking event of over 300 care partners, and I was with them for eight hours. Yet, for all of the information and tools that I shared, I believe the most significant thing I said all day was actually said to me from my friend who is living with dementia, with whom I had met the night before by computer. My friend Lauren has been living with young onset Lewy Body. I know that Lauren has been struggling even more with loneliness lately because one of her closest friends died last month. Her letter to Susan is included in this month's journal. As you read it, I invite you to see the beauty of connection and the strength it gives us.

During my speaking event I read Lauren's text to me and I share this with you as our meditation this month. To me, it is beautiful, poignant, touching, it is truth from the heart.

"Thanks for hanging out with me yesterday. Those zooms help me stay connected to you and PAC and to myself. Now go have an amazing time with your people. Tell them to slow down. Use less words and try to recognize how lonely having dementia is."

Amen, and Amen. Let us resolve to keep the connection going.