

The Journey of Discovery

A Meditation

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“The true journey of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes but in having fresh eyes.”

- Marcel Proust

The journey of dementia can be a journey of discovery, one in which we can find new landscapes if we look with fresh eyes. But this can be a difficult thing to do. Has there been a time when you looked at a person living with dementia with whom you are connected, and thought, “Where did they go?” It can feel like it is difficult to find our loved one because dementia can make it hard for someone to live or look the way they and we are used to. While this can be a trying time, we still want to stay connected to, and have a relationship with, our loved one.

We know that for a relationship to be healthy, it requires that both people be flexible, understanding, and live with the assumption that each person is doing the best that they can. When brain change happens, the flexibility, understanding, and assumption that everyone is doing the best they can, now rests on our shoulders because our brain still has this ability.

One of the first steps that can be helpful in maintaining our connection is to take a moment to notice your person, and to notice with fresh eyes. Notice what they are paying attention to, what is helpful, what causes them to struggle, and where they find their joy. When we look at our person, they need us to look at them with fresh eyes. Eyes that can celebrate who, what, and where they have been in the past and also who, what, and where they are going; who they are becoming. Everyone is new each day and we can see this newness when we look at one another with fresh eyes. Yes, someone living with dementia may be becoming someone with different abilities both in tasks of daily living, and in abilities to connect, and that can be hard for those of us who have loved them. We would all like to see a new landscape, one that does not involve dementia, and yet we can discover new and meaningful ways to be connected and to celebrate what is possible when we have fresh eyes.

Take five minutes out of your day to look at your loved one with fresh eyes. Take five deep breaths and say to yourself, “Today I will notice what brings struggle and what brings joy and I will do my best to be part of that joy.”