

Person Living with Dementia gives film Still Alice “Two Thumbs up” By: Haley Morrison, Nursing Student, Trent University

In Peterborough, we recently finished delivering a four-week First Steps education series for people living with dementia and their family members. On the final day, one of the class members, a woman living with dementia, offered this recommendation for the film Still Alice. “I think everybody should see it. I feel it really showed what it is like to live with this disease.” So head out to the theatres and take in this great film.

The success of the movie Still Alice, based on a novel about a woman’s experience living with dementia, is raising awareness about dementia around the world. If you enjoyed this book and or movie, wait until you read these books written by real people who are living with dementia. The following authors Christine Bryden, Richard Taylor, and Thomas DeBaggio have all written books about their life experiences while living and growing with Alzheimer’s disease. For those of you who really enjoyed the book and movie Still Alice, these books may be very engaging and enhance your perspective of the disease. The Alzheimer Society has copies of these books in our lending library; so contact one of our offices if you would like to borrow one.

Christine Bryden’s book is called **Dancing with Dementia: My Story of Living Positively with Dementia**. Christine was only 46 and a single mother living with 3 children when she was diagnosed with dementia. This book focuses on vivid personal accounts she has experienced while living with dementia, specifically focusing on her exploration of the effects of memory loss, realization of the difficulties of previous simple tasks, and her overall loss of independence. This book really points out how dementia can challenge some individuals’ personal identity, but also how it can lead to the process of self-discovery. A quote from this book that may be very tangible to someone living with Alzheimer’s or other dementias or caring for someone with this disease is “Our reality can become caught between dreams and daily life, because between sleep and awake is another world – a terror-land of illusion, inhabited by dark shapes, real feelings, but an inability to move, or speak, or escape. So what is real, what is true?” (pg. 146)

Richard Taylor’s book is called **Alzheimer’s from the Inside Out**. The book is a thoughtful and reflective collection of various essays Richard has written since he was first diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease. Richard, a psychologist was diagnosed with this disease at the age of 58. Since then he has become a powerful advocate for improving the care for individuals living with Alzheimer’s. This book is recommended to be an appealing read for anyone affected by this disease, as there may be comfort taken in the familiarity of various experiences and stories that Richard has encountered. The following is a quote taken from his book: “I am envious because I wish I could always see a silver lining through the dark clouds shining.” (pg. 136)

Thomas DeBaggio’s book is called **Losing My Mind: An Intimate Look at Life with Alzheimer’s**. Thomas was diagnosed with early onset Alzheimer’s disease at the age of 58. Losing my Mind is a book that describes Thomas’s happy days of his youth, and also the burden that this disease has placed on his loved ones. It also contains evidence of the brilliance of memory, and the strength of the human spirit. A quote taken from this book that

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may be very relatable for some individuals is: "I am at the edge of uncertainty. I walk through my house where I have lived for over twenty-five years and I have the feeling sometimes I am in a motel, an unfamiliar place of transition." (pg. 76)

References

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DeBaggio, T. (2002). *Losing my mind: an intimate look at life with Alzheimer's*. Simon and Schuster.

Taylor, R. (2007). *Alzheimer's from the inside out*. Baltimore, MD: Health Professions Press.

Thanks go to Haley Morrison for this contribution to our monthly e-newsletter. Haley is one of two Nursing students from Trent University who are currently completing a placement at the Alzheimer Society.