

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 35.6 million people lived with dementia in 2010 A majority of the sufferers from dementia are women -- Is this due to the fact that women tend to have longer lifespans? That is probably not the whole picture. In fact, ***caregivers are most often women*** and researchers have noted that the stress, anxiety, social isolation, and depression as a result of the task can lead to dementia for themselves.

Take a piece of paper and look back at your life. Write down key turning points in your life...marriage, kids, careers, etc. Write down "Your Chapters". This will include your successes; hardships; endings and new beginnings. If you are like me, you can list quite a few in a short period of time. It was easy for me to think of 10 chapters. Then, I thought of another one to insert between the third and fourth. Now I have 11 chapters. But wait. Another exists, and then another. Every chapter tells a piece of who you are.

Now look through your chapters. Were *your* chapters announced? Were you capable of fingering through the index of your life to see what the next section was to bring. Probably not. Unlike a book, life's chapters often come...unannounced. It isn't until we have lived the chapter that we realize, it was one. Wouldn't it be awesome to know when a new "life chapter" was beginning? Could you then have an effect on the content? A little tweak here...a little tweak there...take this road and avoid the low road...smile, laugh, make a difference; hold your head high; have **HOPE** and give light for the journey for those who will follow...and love yourself and others from the first page to the last.

This is a new chapter in your life. This is what this support group is all about. It is the next chapter in your life. It has a chapter heading called: **SPOUSAL OR PARENT CAREGIVING**. One of the key gender differences in caregiving is in approach. ***Men tend to view caregiving as a problem to be solved; they focus on tasks, whereas women focus on relationships.*** Being a caregiver will force you to make decisions that you did not even know existed. It will make you stronger in the process. It will change you forever. You will now have the insight to help others on the same path...they are just down the road and have not caught up with you yet. Others will be ahead of you on the pathless path and will lead you to the knowledge that you need. In the group you will learn how to cope with this disease. We will offer you new hope for a chapter you have already titled **HOPELESS**.

Let us change the chapter title to **NEW HOPE**. This will be the hardest chapter in your life. It will change everything. It will change relationships. It will strengthen some and weaken others. Some will go away, never to return. It will also bring new people into your life, and give you new wisdom that will rock you to your soul. It will force you to learn new things, and in the process, you may want to hold on for the ride of your life. Nothing has prepared you for this chapter. Nothing will remain the way you remember. It will be hard to accept the things you cannot change, but we will give you courage to change the things you can. You will be blessed with the wisdom to know the difference. We warmly welcome you and offer you a new **SEASON OF HOPE**.

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Karen Truman, PhD, President

The Chapters of My Life

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