

“We Know We Did the Right Thing”

By Kathy Dubs, Editor, Desert Southwest Chapter Newsletter

In the continuing saga of caring for someone with Alzheimer’s disease, I find one of the most frustrating things is dealing with people who think we’re holding my mother-in-law, Kitty, prisoner.

Because Kitty is only in the second stage of Alzheimer’s, she can still hold a conversation, read, write, dress, and feed herself. At first glance, she looks perfectly normal. She has a fairly decent recollection of “the good old days,” so she can talk about when she was younger and sound perfectly okay.

However, when it comes to short-term memory, she can’t remember if she took her medication, what she ate for breakfast, or even if she *ate* breakfast. Hence, she lost 40 pounds because of forgetting to eat. She used to drive around her neighborhood, because she couldn’t remember where she lived. She often paid her bills twice because she couldn’t remember she had already paid them. Even though she’s lived in a care home for over a year, she still can’t remember the name of the lady who owns it, whom she sees every day. The list goes on and on.

I’m sure this same description fits a lot of your loved ones in the first or second stage of Alzheimer’s disease.

For us, what it came down to was a safety issue. We were afraid she would harm herself or someone else. We had to ignore the peer pressure of what other people thought about the situation.

After long discussions with the helpful staff at the Alzheimer’s Association, we decided the best option for us was to move her into a care home where she would be safe. It’s hard to have “thick skin” and turn the other way when people criticize us for putting her there. But we know we did the right thing. You might be lucky enough to have the resources to care for your loved one at home.

Whatever the situation, don’t feel shy to call the Alzheimer’s Association if you need help make those hard decisions. The Helpline staff is trained to help lead you in the right direction. After a year-and-a-half, I still call them when I need a non-judgmental opinion. It’s wonderful to have someone who will listen to your problems and make helpful suggestions. Helpline services are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

(The West Virginia Helpline number is 1-800-491-2717.)