

WE HAVE
DEMENTIA.
WE ARE STILL
FUNCTIONING
PEOPLE.

HAVE YOU
CONSIDERED
HOW MUCH
WE NEED YOU
TO
UNDERSTAND?



Have You Considered?

Thoughtful works by a person
with early-onset dementia
—living well and living with purpose—
in spite of the obstacles.

~ Janine R. Whited ~

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In the early stage of Alzheimer's, most people function independently and may still drive, take part in social activities, enjoy trips, volunteer and even work.

The early stages of Alzheimer's can last for years.

Those with early-onset Alzheimer's more often demonstrate atypical presentations than those with late-onset Alzheimer's disease.

Many with early-onset Alzheimer's do not have significant memory loss initially—the classic hallmark symptom of Alzheimer's.

In relation to cognitive function, people with young-onset Alzheimer's may show relatively isolated problems with episodic memory—the ability to form new memories of recent episodes of their lives.

There are many myths, misunderstandings, misconceptions and stereotypes about early-onset Alzheimer's.

Because of their young age, people may not believe they have the disease, may question their diagnosis or even dismiss it.

Remember, the early stages of Alzheimer's can last for years.

Stigma can have a significant impact on well-being and quality of life.

Stigma against dementia encompasses any negative attitude or discriminatory behavior against people living with dementia, just on the basis of having the disease.

We need you to help us avoid isolation.
Please acknowledge us—include us—understand us.

We need family to help us feel cherished—loved—wanted—needed—
not inconvenient, incompetent, invalid, incapable, inept, or insignificant.

Human connection and inclusion are vital.

We need you to understand that Rejection Kills.

The brain makes no distinction between a broken arm and an aching heart.

That's why social exclusion needs a health warning.

We need to be allowed to volunteer—contribute—help—give.

We may still be independent and self-sufficient in many ways—but we still need your support.

Remember, the early stages of Alzheimer's can last for years.

We need you to consider the devastating impact of rejection and exclusion—the emotional harm—the pain.

We are living with dementia, but we did not choose to have this disease and we do not appreciate being labelled and ignored, among other negative responses, just because of our diagnosis.

People hold a very narrow view of what dementia looks like. People with dementia who do not align with this view are challenged and undermined.

Stigma is one of the biggest barriers for those of us living with dementia to live fully with dignity and respect.

Remember, the early stages of Alzheimer's can last for years.

Please don't ignore us.

Please don't avoid us.

Please don't reject us.

Please don't exclude us and abandon us.

Support us.

Be Kind.

Love us.

We need friends to help us feel cherished—loved—wanted—needed—not inconvenient, incompetent, invalid, incapable, inept, or insignificant.



Janine left her career as a director of project management in 2017 and struggled with no job, income or health insurance for over a year before she was finally diagnosed with young-onset Alzheimer's in 2018 at the age 53. While the diagnosis was hard to receive, it was also a relief to finally have an answer to her struggles of the prior few years.

Since the diagnosis, she has learned to make accommodations in areas where she struggles, to give herself grace where she might fall short and to enjoy even the smallest accomplishments. She is excited for the opportunity to serve on the board of Dementia Alliance International (DAI) and advocate for herself and others with dementia as she continues to regain confidence in who she is and what she is still capable of accomplishing.

The *Have You Considered* Series... Have you considered how much we need you to understand?

Thoughtful works by a person with early-onset dementia —living well and living with purpose—in spite of the obstacles. ~Janine R. Whited~