



The balance of Alzheimer

Maxi Rodriguez – AFAGA psychologist

It's known that many things we were used to before dementia appeared vanish when it comes into our lives. Both to the people that suffer directly from it and to those relatives who are by their side every day.

Dreams and projects are broken, but on the other hand experience is gained and positive emotions –that may have been hidden or not enough valued- are treasured.

It's a balance of what we'll win and what we'll lose, and when we finish our work as carers, we'll have the result of that balance. It will depend on what would happen to us along the way with the Alzheimer disease and how we would manage the illness and our feelings and the ones of the people we take care from.

Ever since that name came into our lives, we witnessed how our beloved one stops being the person we knew little by little. We had to adapt ourselves to what that person becomes and we have to deal with that every single day. Because with this illness, each day is different.

It is important to remember not to be overwhelmed thinking about the future, so as we can live every day as the first day. If not, time will go by and we will live each minute full of angst – and in many cases, an unjustified angst.

We should be aware that our beloved one will lose some abilities –even those which compromise his personal and social identity. We will have to start a process of anticipated grief in order to assume that some losses throughout the illness will have to be faced.

Roles within the family get modified. If you're a spouse, you'll have to add to your responsibilities the ones that your partner had to take care of before the illness. If you're a son, you'll have to become the "father of your father". And so this will happen with each relationship around the patient.

If we assume our new role, we can enjoy some nice and pleasant moments with our beloved one. We have to let him express himself the way he feels in that moment. We are not there to judge what he's going through.

Some people will accept this, some others will find it hard and some will leave the side of the patient. But we should not get frustrated or disappointed. The important thing is that those who stay, will do it with enthusiasm.

Besides of the changes, we will also have to work with ourselves –with our emotions, our values, our time, etc. And we have to be with the PATIENT.

Patients with dementia teach us that something as simple as affection –a cuddle, a kiss, a smile-, is the most important and basic thing every human needs. Even though sometimes we forget about this.

How does your balance look like?