



Speaking from Experience Alzheimer's Disease & other Dementia

Transcript for chapter 1 of 8: Early signs

Ellen (cares for her husband, Russ): I suspected for quite a long while. Not taking as much responsibility. Losing car keys, losing his wallet, losing his watch. Getting lost when he was going out driving. All these little signs sort of started to add up in my own mind.

Anne (cares for her husband, Peter): Well, it was when my husband, Peter, started to withdraw, sort of within himself. He started not wanting to talk to me and he started to withdraw from the children, and to his friends, to a degree. He started getting very tired. He used to go to bed early, and I thought that was a way of avoiding me. I thought that there was a problem with our marriage, rather than something physically wrong with him.

Judy and Susie (cared for their mother): It was day by day things that started to come undone to begin with. Little things, like not being able to use the taps in the bathroom, that we thought was a major plumbing problem turned out to be the fact that mother couldn't regulate hot and cold.

Jan (cares for her husband, James): We'd gone to a little cottage in the middle of the rainforest, sort of to have a relaxing time. Me thinking Jamie's stressed. By then, I'd given up work because I thought he's stressed, and I was in a pretty stressful job and... Just the two of us, it wasn't working. And we played a game of Scrabble. And we'd always done things like play a game of Scrabble on holidays. And it took 5 days to play one game of Scrabble, and he was so determined he wasn't going to give in. And I just felt sicker and sicker as the days went by and I realised that he just couldn't think up words.

Anne: Then he had a problem at work; they felt he wasn't performing his job properly. They referred him to a psychologist, because they thought he was suffering from stress and, from there, he was referred to a doctor, just to a GP, but that's when I thought that there was possibly something more wrong, rather than something that was an emotional problem, or something caused by stress.

Jan: Then, driving home, he suddenly said, "I've got a problem. I can't remember things. And I feel terrible because I can't talk to you. I can't think of things to say, and I'm worried there's something wrong with me". So, we talked about what it could be, and whether it was a brain tumour or whatever, or Alzheimer's. Alzheimer's seemed so unlikely because he was only 55.

Jim (cares for his wife, Molly): I think the preliminary signs; I probably missed a few of them. But the real cruncher came when Molly appeared to be having trouble with her eyes.

Gwen (has Alzheimer's Disease): Well, I really didn't think I had a problem, I just thought it was perhaps because I was living alone and I wasn't able to relax.

Judy and Susie: She was an instant 'no' to any suggestion. If you said, "would you like to come over for lunch?" "Oh, no." Then you'd sort of have to coax her into coming out. And



there was no real reason why she wouldn't come, because she always used to like to go out previously.

Jim: We went and saw an eye doctor, and I'd known this guy previously. And he called me aside and he said, "Jim, I think you should see a Geriatrician". He said, "I think Molly may have Alzheimer's Disease". And I could remember it very clearly, because I knew this guy reasonably well and I was standing at the window in his little office, and I stared out the window and I thought, 'bloody eye doctor, what would he know about it?!' He was dead right, of course.

Jan: He refused to have any tests done. He refused to go seek advice, because he said that if he spoke to any of his partners then they would, you know, you just couldn't be a doctor if you had a major problem. And especially if it did turn out to be Alzheimer's, then he wouldn't be able to work anymore. But then, if you'd point out that he wouldn't be able to work if he did have Alzheimer's and he shouldn't be working. That was another sort of problem that he just couldn't really quite face at that stage.

Adrian (James' friend and former business partner): He was having difficulty with his memory. He would forget a lot of drugs. He was very clever about it, because he made up a lot of prompts and reminder cards. So, I don't know for how long, he hid it very well. Because he was a very bright man. And often at partnership meetings or so, he would forget events that had happened in the past.

Ellen: You know, you sense that something's not quite as it used to be, but at that stage you don't have any label to put on it.