



DISCUSSION GUIDE

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Discussion guide for

KEEPING LOVE ALIVE AS MEMORIES FADE:

The 5 Love Languages and the Alzheimer's Journey

If you're reading this after having finished the book, we hope you are feeling equipped and empowered for the road ahead. If you're consulting this as you read, we hope you find the process helpful. Either way, we are glad you're here, and we commend you for the energy you give in caring for those with a very difficult disease.

This chapter-by-chapter guide will help you get the most out of the book. *Whether you prefer to discuss the questions in a caregiver support group or with your family, or to ponder them on your own, thinking through them will help you translate the principles of this book into real practice.*

Blessings on your journey,

Gary, Debbie, and Ed

THE FOLLOWING ABBREVIATIONS APPEAR IN THIS GUIDE:

PWD = *person with dementia*

AD = *Alzheimer's disease*

CHAPTER 1 | *Ed and Rebecca: A Love Story*

1. What emotions did you feel while reading Ed and Rebecca's story?
2. Which parts of their story mirror your own journey with a friend or loved one?
3. At the present time, would you describe your role as care partner or caregiver? (p. 30)
4. How would you explain to others the difference between dementia and AD? (p. 31)
5. Which of the "Facts about Alzheimer's Disease" resonate with or concern you most? (pp. 33–34)

CHAPTER 2 | *Love: It's All in Your Head*

1. Why do the authors describe Alzheimer's as "a family disease"? (p. 35)
2. Do you believe that a PWD's need for emotional love persists to the end of the Alzheimer's journey? Why or why not? (p. 41–44)
3. Why is emotional disconnection so common in relationships that involve Alzheimer's or another kind of dementia? (pp. 45–48)
4. What is the difference between love as a feeling and love as an action? (p. 54–55) Why is this distinction important in relationships with those who have AD?
5. Take the quiz in this chapter and share with your group what you believe to be your primary love language. What expressions of this love language make you feel especially loved?
6. To determine the PWD's primary love language (or what it may have been prior to dementia), follow the instructions that correspond to their disease stage. What is your "educated guess" about the person's love language?

CHAPTER 3 | *Alzheimer's Disease Puts Love to the Test*

1. Has your relationship with a PWD been affected by any of these “threats to the emotional glue”? (pp. 68–76)

Delusional thinking

Mistaken identity

Odd behavior

Loss of sexual intimacy

Disinhibition

Repeating

Shadowing

If so, how has this changed your relationship with the PWD?

2. What are you grieving as a result of your friend's or loved one's dementia? (pp. 76–78)

3. What did Betty's friend mean when she said Betty was “married and widowed at the same time”? Do you ever feel this way? (p. 77)

4. How is the stress of caregiving impacting you? (pp. 78–84)

5. Caregiving is a team effort. Do you have enough emotional support and practical caregiving help from others? If not, who could you invite to become part of your care team? (pp. 92–94)

6. In light of the information on pages 90 and 91, would you be acting selfishly or wisely if you followed the tips on pages 94–95?

CHAPTER 4 | *Every Day Is the Best Day*

1. Reminisce about the life of the PWD for whom you provide care—their personality, vocation, hobbies, accomplishments, etc. What role has he or she played in your life? If your relationship has been difficult, how does this now help or hinder your ability to provide care for this person? (pp. 98–99)
2. If the person for whom you provide care has AD, what stage of the disease do you believe he or she is in? (pp. 106–109)
3. Discuss the section on pages 110–111 titled, “Speaking the Love Languages Throughout the Alzheimer’s Journey: Why it Matters.” How can the five love languages help you to “significantly influence a patient’s quality of life” and improve their sense of well-being?
4. As the PWD becomes less and less able to initiate or reciprocate love, do you (or will you) find it difficult to make a continual choice to love? (pp. 111–113)
5. Share one “takeaway” you gain from each of the love language charts:
 - Words of Affirmation (p. 115)**
 - Physical Touch (p. 118)**
 - Quality Moments (p. 120)**
 - Receiving Gifts (p. 122)**
 - Acts of Kindness (p. 123)**
6. Why do the authors suggest speaking all five love languages when a person in mid- to late-Alzheimer’s becomes childlike? (p. 124)

CHAPTER 5 | *Facilitating Love*

1. If a person with AD can experience “the joy and satisfaction of expressing love to others,” why is the help of a facilitator needed? (p. 128)
2. How does music benefit those with AD as well as those providing care for them? (pp. 136–140)
3. When a person with AD feels emotionally disconnected from loved ones and reacts with fear, agitation, or aggression, what responses from family members can make things worse? How should loved ones respond instead? Why? (p. 141, see also “Attachment “ in Appendix B)
4. How can caregivers and family members respond to delusional thinking and negative behaviors using the Acknowledge, Affirm, Redirect strategy? (pp. 146–148)
5. How would you comfort and counsel a family that is wrestling with the emotionally difficult decision about whether to place their loved one in a care facility? (pp. 151–153)

CHAPTER 6 | *Stories of Hesed*

1. What is hesed? (pp. 37, 54–55, 156, 204) How does it relate to the Bible verse at the top of page 155?
2. How does the story of Troy and Danielle illustrate hesed? (pp. 155–158)
3. What caused the “U-turn” in Sandra’s attitude about caregiving for Aaron? (pp. 158–162)
4. How does Lewy body dementia differ from Alzheimer’s disease? (p. 163; see also “Non-Alzheimer’s Dementias” in Appendix B)
5. Who and what did Gracie’s experiment change? (pp. 170–180)?

CHAPTER 7 | *Voices of Experience*

1. If you had been a focus group participant, what “lesson learned” would you have shared? (pp. 183–184)
2. Do you have a humorous caregiving story? (pp. 191–192) Share this story with those in your discussion group (or with someone else later if you are not in a group).
3. What helps you “keep on keeping on”? (pp. 192–95)
4. Angela told the focus group that remembering her husband’s smile “will mean the world to me, so I want to really hold onto the memory of that...” Troy said, “In the early stages they ask you something over and over and over again. Remember that, because one day down the road you will no longer hear their voice” (p. 196). What do you want to remember?
5. On a scale of 1–10, how full is your emotional “love tank” right now? Discuss Gary’s comments about how to keep that “tank” full as the PWD continues to decline in their ability to express and reciprocate love (pp. 196–198).

CHAPTER 8 | *The Journey No One Wants to Take*

1. Reflect upon the opening quote by Viktor Frankl. How does it apply in your own experience as a dementia caregiver or family member? (p. 199)
2. Ed mentions several good things that have come out of the difficult journey with his wife's AD (pp. 201–202). Have any good things resulted from your loved one's dementia or from your caregiving experience so far?
3. Debbie wrote, "I have been deeply touched by the sincere and selfless love of the incredible care partners I have come to admire so much" (p. 202). How have you been inspired, encouraged, or helped by others who care for a PWD?
4. Several caregivers told the authors that it is God's love at work in their own lives that empowers them to love the person in their care so well (pp. 14, 193). What role does personal faith play in your caregiving?
5. In the words of the researcher quoted in chapter 4, "The emotional life of an Alzheimer's patient is alive and well" (p. 110, 203). How will this knowledge affect your future caregiving?