**When Cognitive Loss Impacts a Marriage – Part 2**

There is no predetermined set of stages for how cognitive decline progresses. A person may have Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) and that is the only type of cognitive loss they experience. In many cases MCI will progress to further loss of cognition. How it progresses and how it affects the marriage depends on the actual diagnosis and the couple. There are several types of dementia related illnesses. The Alzheimer’s Association website lists 11 main types of dementia (<https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/what-is-dementia/types-of-dementia>). A diagnosis is reached through specialized physician visits, cognitive and neurological testing, laboratory tests, brain scan, psychiatric review, and genetic tests.

Once a diagnosis is reached then there are many options for the holistic care of the couple as they go through the process. Even though they will face challenges and changes going forward, the goal would be that they also find enjoyment in their married life.

**Back to George & June**

George’s MCI increased over time. It was a constant learning process for both. For a couple of years George was able to be aware of the symptoms and work together with June. The kids were incredibly supportive and would visit to give June a chance to take a break. The cognitive decline continued, and the doctors started the process to find the diagnosis. After testing, scans, and multiple doctors working together, George’s diagnosis was Alzheimer’s Disease. Knowing this helped the rest of the family plan for how best to support June and George.

**A New Diagnosis & A Professional Care Manager**

One of the first things they did was partnered with a professional care manager. The care manager was not only able to recommend how to best provide care for George but also shared support information for June. The goal was to keep George living at home as long as possible. By sharing resources, the care manager was able to help them bring in a couple of aides from a home care agency who were able to provide hands on care for George. This freed up June to be his wife and spend quality time with him. It was a difficult process to lose that close friendship they had when they first married but she shared that it was a different type of deep love to be able to care for him during this struggle.

George’s Alzheimer’s Disease did not present his best qualities. The care manager gave June information to attend a support group which really helped. As the disease progressed, he became more difficult to care for and he would get very agitated. It became evident that having him in the home was becoming a concern for June’s safety so the difficult decision was made to find him a memory care unit in an assisted living facility that could care for him 24/7 and could handle his outbursts. June was accepting of this decision because George had explained to her when he was still cognitive that it was his wish that she move him if he was becoming physically agitated or was too much work to manage at home. The care manager helped them find an amazing solution where June felt comfortable that he was being cared for in a compassionate manner. She visited him every day and would stay longer on Saturday to watch a movie with him. This continued for a couple of years. When George passed away, it was bittersweet to the family. They missed him and yet knew he was no longer suffering. The whole process was extremely hard on June. She would talk about how much they loved each other in their younger days and how they still loved each other the same amount, just in a different way, at the end. Her eyes would twinkle with stories of their life together. He would be deeply missed.

Cognitive decline will change marriage. There are many resources to alleviate the burden and allow the spouse to focus on loving and supporting the person with the decline. Family support and support groups help the spouse who is caring for them and the rest of the family. Nobody knows when they go into marriage what is going to happen throughout the entire marriage but one thing that many aging couple deal with is cognitive impairment and diseases. Being informed and working with a care manager helps alleviate the stress and worry. Ultimately, the goal is to help the couple maintain their love despite the struggles they face!