



NJAMFT Executive Director Tarcila Sutterley LMFT, shares a personal experience with Alzheimer's as she introduces the video below.

The appearance of Alzheimer's behavior in the family system reminds me of experiencing a high level earthquake. Your whole world is violently shaken. The aftershocks go on and on with chaotic confusion, anger, pain, frustration and paralyzing fear take over your emotions in a rotational sequence. These feelings bounce back and forth among family members as you each try to find your balance.

The duration of this early phase in the Alzheimer's family varies significantly. For my family, it lasted for almost four years. My husband was only in his mid-fifties and just about every known physical and psychological diagnosis was considered and dismissed by the dozen doctors with whom we consulted. When we were told that it was "probably" Alzheimer's, my husband's reaction was "Okay, no more doctors, no more going to New York." He wrote the word dementia on two pieces of paper, one he kept in his pocket, the other propped up on the kitchen table.

In the following video we see Gladys, a lovely lady with dementia, which has progressed to much later stages. Between the early onset phase and this latter one, our family made countless attempts to adapt, accommodate and accept my husband's ever changing needs and mysterious behaviors. I had extensive experience as a special education teacher-trainer. I had accommodated the individual needs of many students. This was my forte and I felt confident and competent to provide for my husband's needs. WRONG! The very act of adapting to an easier system was beyond him. He was like a two-year old who wasn't approaching three, but rather a two-year old approaching the age of one.

The power of music to reach Gladys is equaled by the power of human touch. When Naomi caresses the face of Gladys, that rare expression of peaceful joy that we see on an Alzheimer victim's face, is such a reward for the caregiver! When working with members of an Alzheimer's family, this reward is what I want family members to recognize and value. The person you knew has changed. Each family member is forever learning to relate to a new dynamic. Please click on the video below to share in this amazing moment with Naomi and Gladys.

Naomi Feil, founder of Validation Therapy, shares a breakthrough moment of communication with Gladys Wilson, a woman who was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2000 and is virtually non-verbal. In this heart wrenching, 6 minute video, we see just how powerful music can be on patients with Alzheimers. To view the video, please click on the link below (Note: There is a brief, 15 second commercial prior to the video beginning.)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=CrZXz10FcVM