Writing our Lives as Caregivers

(A free guided writing seminar for caregivers)

Before you began this dementia journey with your loved one, could you have even imagined how your life and relationships would change? The tenderness. The pain. The anxiety. The sense of purpose. The loss of identity. The love. Your story is an important one. Writers and family caregivers, Pauletta Hansel and Annette Januzzi Wick, invite you to participate in this nurturing and inspiring writing session to help you tell your story on the page. This is an opportunity to use writing to reflect on your shared journey and to share as much or as little as you choose in a supportive and safe circle of other caregivers. No previous writing experience is necessary; participants of the 2016 workshop are welcome to return. SPACE IS LIMITED. REGISTRATION REQUIRED.

DATE: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2017
TIME: 9:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.
LOCATION: RENAISSANCE WEST – MULTI-PURPOSE ROOM
5156 N BEND CROSSING, CINCINNATI, OH 45247
(Enter front entrance portico with Renaissance logo on it)

FACILITATORS:

Pauletta Hansel, Cincinnati’s first Poet Laureate, is a poet, memoirist, teacher and caregiver to her mother, Larnie, who has vascular dementia. More information at: https://www.paulettahansel.wordpress.com.

Annette Januzzi Wick is a writer, teacher, blogger and care partner for her mother. She writes a blog about the slow waltz with her mother’s dementia at www.findyouinthesun.com.

FEEDBACK FROM PREVIOUS WRITING WORKSHOPS:

“This was such a beautiful experience. So much more than I expected. We laughed, we cried, we understood each other.”

“There is nothing more meaningful than giving others the opportunity to express so deeply what they feel.”

“This was so beautifully crafted. I can’t wait to attend another session if it’s offered again.”
There is much more hurting than healing in our lives right now.
An incredible sadness.
Robbed of all this time, many years, with my mother.
I let go of the colorful gal I once knew; now her words cut through me like a machete, leave a hemorrhage like no other.
All this before I even sit down.

I want so desperately to believe God has a miracle for my dad.
For my beautiful Gina, in beautiful Bermuda—how I would love to take her again, away from the tiny world she knows—and the bitterness of that impossibility.

I hold to every word, to every syllable, to every streak of black remaining in Mom’s soft white hair.
I know I am still her baby girl.
I cling to my old memories.
I don’t want it to change, but it does.

But then, a conversation—mother and daughter.
Mom hunched her shoulders and walked in a silly way, making me laugh.
She doesn’t need that jacket on, but she’ll wear it anyway, singing “76 Trombones” and I join in.
It takes her a moment to connect my place in her room with my place in her life.
I know she is in there.
She looked in my eyes; I let her love me.
Mom was back, but not for long.

The touch of your hand—unnerving, unbounded by time.
At Mirror Lake in Eden Park the air had cleared, the colors of sunset filled the western sky.
Tiny blue gills swirled alone in lazy Van Gogh circles.
Heads together, giggling like conspirators and wishing for more.
I am still comforted by your touch.

Moments—come and gone—that would not have been had we not been present.
Engulfing moments unborn, unknown by us.
A salve to put on the wounds part—the baggage of the day and my beat-up body, the parts that broke, under the pressure of loneliness.
I breathe deep until the next time; I sink into the car and think about doing it again tomorrow.

The contrast—the leaving, the spent memories so different, so contrary, so final.
Or maybe not final, maybe this too will change.
I hold her strength, yet I cannot find her.
The joy we had, the hope and promise of things to come.
I want to believe.
I cling to these prayerful words: Relax, you are safe.
I will be here for you—not forever, but for as long as I can.

Created by participants from “Writing Our Lives as Caregivers” workshop in July 2016 with Pauletta Hansel, Cincinnati Poet Laureate, Annette Januzzi Wick, & the Alzheimer’s Association of Greater Cincinnati.
REGISTRATION: WRITING OUR LIVES AS CAREGIVERS

DATE: SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2017
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How did you hear about this program?: __ Alzheimer’s Assn. staff __ Healthcare provider __ Family/friend/co-worker
__ Mailing to home/work __ TV/radio/newspaper ad __ Website __ Other

Your name (please print): ______________________________________________________________________
Street Address: _______________________________________________________________________________
City: _________________________________________ State: _________ Zip code: _______________________
County: _________________________ E-mail address: _______________________________________________________________________
Telephone 1: ( ______ ) ______________________ Telephone 2: ( ______ ) ________________________
Circle one: Home Work Cellular Circle one: Home Work Cellular
Your Gender: __ M __ F Your Age: _____ Your highest level of Education: ______________________________
Your Ethnicity: __ White __ Black __ Hispanic __ Native Amer. __ Asian __ Other: ______________________________
Your relationship to person with illness: __ Self __ Spouse __ Adult child/in-law __ Sibling __ Other:_________
Age of person with illness: _______ Gender of person with illness: ___ Male ___ Female Veteran: ___Yes ___No
Diagnosis: __________________________ Date of diagnosis (estimated): ________________________

Mail back completed registration form to:  OR  Fax to:  513-345-8446  OR  Call 513-721-4284 to register via
644 Linn St, Suite 1026, Cincinnati, OH 45203
phone