

You Deserve a Break Today!

I drove by the local McDonald's and had a flashback that really sent me down a rabbit hole. Crazy the thoughts I have sometimes and where those thoughts lead me.

I remember when McDonald's was built and opened in our small (once rural) town a few years back and Bob wanted to go there and eat. I was opposed to it. Never really gave my negative feelings much thought. I just had other places I would rather eat my meal. I love eating out and a fast-food stop doesn't constitute eating out for me. Well, unless it's In-N-Out Burger.

Bob was well into his decline with Dementia, and I was "in charge". I did all the driving and made all the decisions. Bob usually was very happy just to go along for the ride and never balked at what we did. I was always a take charge person but with Bob's decline, I was 110% in charge. At least I was if he wasn't having a total meltdown but that's a story for another day.

Frequently as we drove by McDonald's he would ask to go there. And without any thought, I would just say no and tell him that we would go elsewhere, or we would go home and eat. It was never discussed more than that.

Now today, about 4-5 years later, this haunts me a bit. Why didn't I do what my husband asked? Why did I discount his request repeatedly?

Were there other things that I didn't give Bob any say in? Did I force feed my decisions on him? And why did I think about this many years later? Lots of questions and not a lot of clarity. But in true Susan fashion I decided that if I journaled on this matter, I might get some clarity and move on from the remorse I'm feeling.

I'm a champion for people with Alzheimer's/Dementia. I think I can support their caregivers and give them sound advice on how to walk the minefield that is Alzheimer's/Dementia. One of the things I'm often found to say is to not argue with your loved one. Not to be critical of your loved one's behaviors. To remember they are still the special person they once were even if they are slipping away day by day. I emphasize treating them with the respect and admiration you once felt. You need to remember that they are not aggravating you on purpose. They don't want to be the way they are any more than you want them to have this disease. They are unable to express themselves. They can't explain or argue why they want to go to McDonald's, but now I realize that if they ask for it, it is important to them.

They are counting on their loved one to take care of all their needs and looking back, I think I had room for improvement. Maybe even in all the 41 years of our marriage and not just in the Dementia years. I can see now that Bob might have thought of me as a bossy person and not just a take charge person!

So, my takeaway from my McDonald's flashback moment (that lasted a few days) is that we all need to honor our loved ones—be they friends, siblings, neighbors, spouses. If they are healthy or ill. Whether they are young or old. If someone asks for something or wants to do something, and it just isn't exactly what you want, be willing to compromise and bend. Say yes. Maybe you won't enjoy the meal, but I know you'll enjoy the moment.