Funia's Story – On her Husband

Marriage Partners

The effect of a serious and terminal illness like ALS can have devastating effects on both partners in a marriage. The relationship of partners of Holocaust survivors is unique and stressful under the best circumstances. Spouses of Holocaust survivors have many roles to play and many hats to wear.

A spouse is not only a husband or a wife. A spouse is a substitute father or mother that perished; a sister or brother killed; and extended family missing. Not an easy task for either partner!

When a terminal illness like ALS strikes one partner, the task becomes even harder. To lose a partner at an advanced age is tough at any time. To lose the person that is your lifeline is devastating. To watch this person being destroyed gradually by the effect of the illness is agony.

Partners choose different mechanisms.

My husband has chosen denial, avoidance or sometimes unhealthy closeness. "Don't worry," he says, "You will get better, you look good! Let's not talk about it!" Anger is constant in the relationship, his and mine.

His anger:
Why me? I am too old to be alone. Why my wife? She is a good person. She took care of me for 54 years. I was working hard to make a living. She took care of the children, and grandchildren she made part of our lives. My relatives are her relatives. She took care of those relationships too. She worked hard and was a good housekeeper. I don't know what to do! All I can do now is pay others to take care of her, and go shopping for groceries. I have never done it before.

My anger:

Why is he so sad and angry all the time? I did not pick the illness. Can't he see how hard it is for me? How hard I am trying to still be in charge? Why is he avoiding me? Or why does he want to be with me all the time? I need space to by myself. And so the stressful battle takes its toll as the illness progresses. I try to live every day as much as I can.

In tribute to Funia and to share her valuable insights, we are featuring this and a number of her other articles in the Homecare Library.

In addition we have prepared a booklet entitled ***"The Way I Am: Living with ALS"*** which has assembled all these thoughts and more. This can be viewed on our website.

You may also order free copies of the booklet by filling out the form on the website.