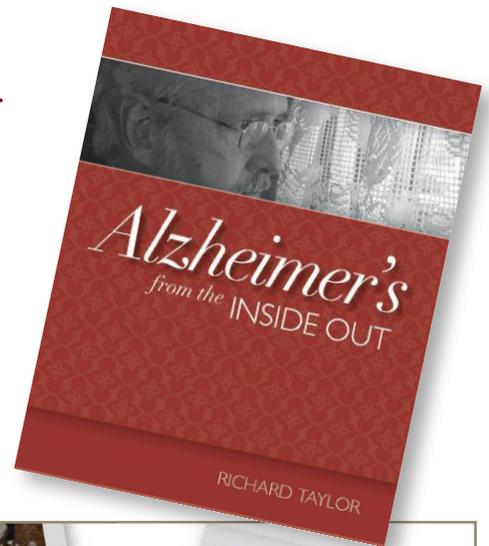


Sing Along with Alzheimer's

Alzheimer's from the Inside Out
By Richard Taylor
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Baltimore, Md.
www.healthpropress.com



“I race up and down the corridors of my mind, frantically seeking to make sense of what's going on around me. Sometimes this process makes me even more lost, and I become lost about why I am lost!” describes Richard Taylor. Unlike ever before, an opportunity exists to walk a mile in someone else's shoes and gain insight into a poorly understood reality. Typically, the ravages of Alzheimer's disease (AD) make it almost impossible for affected individuals to express their feelings and experiences. Now, one remarkable man has the background and mental capability to tell his story in vivid, gripping, and sometimes humorous ways, revealing what the rest of us can only imagine.

Most commonly AD affects people over age 65. In fact, age is the most common risk factor, and the number of people who have the disease doubles every 5 years after age 65. AD is the most common form of dementia, a group of brain disorders that gradually destroys brain cells.

Richard Taylor, PhD, was diagnosed with AD 5 years ago, at age 58. In his book *Alzheimer's from the Inside Out*, the retired psychologist offers poignant and personal insight into his daily experiences, chronicling his worsening dementia. Some people with the disease are unaware of their changing condition. Richard is hyper-aware and



Dr. Richard Taylor continues to lead a rich, vibrant life as he copes with the diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease through writing and sharing his thoughts with others.

has dedicated himself to offering a rare view into the heart and soul of the disease. He began writing about his experience to better understand it himself. “Putting my thoughts in writing has helped me cope with this life-changing diagnosis,” says Taylor. “And now I'm sharing my essays to increase understanding about the disease. I have an obligation to myself and others to speak up and speak out about my experience, feelings, and concerns. If I don't, who will know what it's like to have Alzheimer's disease?”

Robert E. Reichlin, PhD, a licensed clinical psychologist and

geropsychologist in private practice said of the book, “This is an exceptional book, one that people diagnosed with AD and other dementias should read because they will see that they are not alone, that they are indeed comprehensible. For the rest of us, *Alzheimer's from the Inside Out* is a reminder that we care for people, not diseases.”

In one essay on singing, Richard Taylor offers us what he later refers to as his favorite piece of writing. He says, “For some reason, I keep going back to this and rereading it. It makes me feel good inside.” Taylor suggests that singing and music are uplifting.



and alive when I sing!"

The more than 80 essays that are included in the book are punctuated with highlighted quotations from within the essays that, even at a glance, help provide new awareness of how to live with and care for people with AD. A short selection of these highlighted quotations follows.

On learning of his diagnosis:

"I called my wife, who was at work, and read her the conclusions; neither of us responded. I hung up the phone, poured myself a stiff glass of orange juice, and began to cry."

"I have learned to recognize the difference between sympathy and empathy, and I have learned how to accept both of them."

"The fact that I know I have Alzheimer's disease motivates my focus on actively making today better than yesterday, not hoping tomorrow will be better than today."

"I'm not talking about polysyllabic words. I'm looking for my granddaughter's name."

"I want psychiatrists to put down their prescription pads for a moment and listen to me."

On family:

"We spend more time really being together: We talk more, we hug more, we cry more, we laugh more and harder and longer together." ALC

Richard Taylor maintains a busy schedule of lecturing, writing, editing a newsletter, gardening, and playing with his 2 grandchildren. Richard and his wife live in Cypress, Texas. His son and family live across the street.

Richard Taylor has agreed to maintain frequent E-mail contact with *Assisted Living Consult*. In the coming months, Richard will provide a diary of his impressions, struggles, and conquests. Watch for updates in future issues.

In fact his sage advice is, "It is best to sing out loud and loudly. Thinking about singing is like thinking about sex. It is much, much more satisfying if done with all of your body instead of just between your ears. It is much, much more satisfying if others can and do join in." Richard concludes his brief essay on singing with the resolve that "I am going to do more singing. I feel safe, sound, healthy,

Legal Corner

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answers. However, the disparity of AL legislation across the country often fosters more questions and creates more confusion among administrators and directors, especially in times of emergency. To combat this confusion, many industry experts believe that uniform federal regulations governing these facilities will be necessary, putting an end to the hodgepodge of state regulations. The first step in this process will be for state legislatures to recognize that the burgeoning AL industry is made up of facilities that vary in scope, size, and function, and that comprehensive and carefully tailored regulations are necessary. Once this hurdle has been overcome, these regulations can be debated and fashioned into legislation, which can provide the facilities with the tools they need to evaluate perceived emergency situations and determine when they represent true emergencies. ALC

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Our panel of experts also grapples with the issues raised by Mr. Corso and Mr. Littman. Please see *Ask the Experts* on page 37 of this issue for perspectives from those across the AL industry.