

Funneling, Funnels, Alzheimer's, and Me

Richard Taylor, PhD

RICHARD TAYLOR, PhD, is a retired psychologist who lives with and writes about Alzheimer's disease (AD). Richard has agreed to maintain frequent E-mail contact with *ALC* to provide us with a diary of his impressions, struggles, and conquests. Richard Taylor's reflections on AD follow.

I feel like I am trying to hang onto the walls of a large funnel, into which I have been dragged and funneled against my will by Dr. Alzheimer and his sticky-footed troops. It seems to me as if the older I become, the further into the disease I get, the narrower the funnel becomes, and the stronger the funneling becomes. My activities, my conversations, my interests, what I eat and drink, how long I sleep, and how many times I go to the bathroom are each and all being channeled into a funnel that offers a narrower and narrower range of options and behaviors.

Why is it everyone encouraged my own individuality pre-Alzheimer's, and now everyone thinks I can't wait to play bingo, dance the hokey pokey, and learn how to hula dance just like everyone else who has dementia, just like everyone else in the day care respite facility, just like everyone else in this or that orchestrated activity?

It seems as if most of my energy is now devoted to hanging onto myself and the sides of the funnel: resisting the funneling, resisting



Richard Taylor, PhD, provides reflections on his battle with Dr. Alzheimer.

the slide. Less and less time is spent just being me: growing, changing for what feels better. Change that I can change if I wish, not others imposing it on me through manipulation of my environment, subtle physical and psychological threats, and psychopharmacologic narcotic drugs.

Eventually I will end up in the tube at the end of the funnel. It's crowded there. Everyone is pretty much treated the same and acts the same. As they fall out of the end of the funnel, I can hear the joy in people's voices as they once again are free to make their own

choices; free of professionals offering advice, prescriptions, orders on how best they should live the remainder of their lives; free of well-intended and loving caregivers who in the name of safety and their own lack of sense of what it is like to have dementia, or grow old, attempt to impose restrictions on them being themselves.

Sometimes I wonder why I struggle so hard and so resist the funneling. Why do I even attempt to grab onto the sides of the funnel? Just let go!? It's easier for everyone to live what's left of my life that way, isn't it? ALC