

## Our biggest aging worry is fear of dementia

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When it comes to a discussion on aging, most people are primarily concerned about two specific topics: fear of getting a brain disease like dementia, and the role of caregiving. I recently read new books on both topics and want to share them with you.

The fear of getting dementia has been shown, in every study, to be the biggest fear people have around aging. No one wants to go through this loss of their personalities, their ability to think clearly, or make decisions, and they always hope to simply be able to remember.

The first book in fact is called “Remember”, by Lisa Genova. I borrowed this from the Ashland library and it’s also available through Bloomsbury Books. Here’s a short blurb from Goodreads: “A book about how we remember, why we forget, and what we can do to protect our memories, from the Harvard-trained neuroscientist and bestselling author of Still Alice. Just because your memory sometimes fails doesn't mean it's broken or succumbing to disease. Forgetting is actually part of being human”. That’s reassuring, isn’t it?

Genova’s new book is not specifically about dementia, and she provides a view into what a healthy brain looks like. People who notice signs regarding their memory interpret the changes to mean they have the beginnings of dementia. This book will clear up many misunderstandings around our aging brains and how to increase remembering.

This title of the second book, “Already Toast”, by Kate Washington, says it all. You might relate if you’ve ever been a caregiver over a long period of time. The question is, why do caregivers have to be toast? The writer, and her husband who’s ill, are only in their 40s. Regardless of their ages, they’re entering a world where caring for others is not easily addressed, not paid for by insurance, and often takes too great of a toll on those performing these tasks. Being a caregiver is not an easy role to consider, but one that’s likely to impact almost every one of our lives.

From Goodreads: “A revealing look at the role unpaid family caregivers play in a society that fails to provide them with structural support. It’s a clear call for paying and supporting family caregivers. She gives voice to those tasked with the overlooked, vital work of caring for the seriously ill.”

Besides these two books, here are some other resources for additional support on these topics.

For information related to any type of dementia, go to the Alzheimer’s Association online: <https://www.alz.org>. Their 24-hour helpline is available to answer any questions. They can also direct you to our wonderful local online support groups and education classes.

For anyone who is a caregiver, look into the Oregon Care Partners (<https://oregoncarepartners.com>) for free online mini-courses addressing all aspects of caregiving. AARP has an excellent section on caregiving that’s second to none. <https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/?intcmp=GLBNAV-PL-CAR>

Locally, Powerful Tools for Caregivers offers a 6-week online self-care education program for unpaid caregivers of older adults or persons with a disability. From their flier: The class will help reduce personal stress; increase self-care activities; reduce guilt, anger, and depression; and help with setting goals and making difficult decisions. For more information and to sign up for the classes, call the Rogue Valley Council of Government (RVCOG) Aging and Disability Resource Connection (ADRC) at 541-618-7572.

To all who age, your brain health and your ability to provide caregiving are topics worthy of consideration and education. These resources just might provide the help you need.