

2<sup>nd</sup> International Conference on

# DEMENTIA AND DEMENTIA CARE

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## Dementia caregivers: The new agents of change

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After an 18-year journey of dementia caregiving with my mom and a 20+year professional career in Organizational Change consulting, I've come to believe a breakthrough in dementia care might be as simple as unleashing the power that exists within current caregivers. These progressive and devastating brain diseases touch far too many families in our world today. Caring for a loved one with dementia or Alzheimer's is emotionally, physically, financially and spiritually draining. "Self care" can be a vague and elusive concept in the wee hours of early, mid and late stage decline resulting in "survival" as a more common emotional reaction to the journey through dementia with a loved one. Caregivers possess the strength of commitment and compassion within the chaos of caregiving, even

if they are unwilling to recognize those as personal attributes. If we empower caregivers to "flip" the way they think about and respond to everyday emotions that come from the responsibility of care, we may reveal even deeper power. Can this power be turned inward to supercharge "self-care"? In this presentation we'll contrast the concepts of fear with courage, despair with hope, failure with success, loss with acceptance and grief with peace. Human nature drives us to search for hope in the face of adversity and what is dementia caregiving but a perpetual journey through the adversity of these devastating diseases? The strength to walk a caregiver's path finds its roots in the power of hope.

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