
How My Grandfather's Disease Has Changed My Life

As said by Earl Nightingale, "Learn to enjoy every minute of your life. Be happy now. Don't wait for something outside of yourself to make you happy in the future. Think how really precious is the time you have to spend, whether it's at work or with your family. Every minute should be enjoyed and savored." This is a phrase I have learned to live by after my grandfather was diagnosed with Alzheimer's Disease. I know... another narrative essay about a sick relative? Although you may have read many essays written about this, I have seen what has happened to my grandfather and my entire family as a result of his slowly deteriorating condition, and it has taught me so much about life that I feel the need to write about it.

Before this disease started taking his memory and many other basic abilities, he was not only an amazing person, but he was the best grandpa anyone could ask for, and willingly drove for hours to see his grandchildren play twenty minutes of basketball. He was the funniest person I have ever met, and even though I try to find a little bit of that now, he can barely speak. He used to tell me many stories about playing college football, his career, and other extraordinary moments in his life. Although he has not passed away, those abilities and memories he once had seemed to have died.

As a grandfather, he was clearly my role model. As an athlete and innovative businessman that I watched adapt to what the world needed from him, it was easy to look up to him. Now, unfortunately, when I look into his eyes, that amazing spark he had isn't there anymore. He sees me and I can tell that in his eyes he recognizes me, but he has no idea why. It's painful, but although he might not remember me or the great times we had, I know if he could look back on his life, he would be proud and happy with how he lived it. He made people laugh and never faced an obstacle he didn't try to overcome. He looked adversity and challenges in the eye and conquered them.

There's no question that school, sports, summer jobs, and volunteerism, etc. are important to me. However, building and sustaining relationships and being there for my friends and family has tremendously grown in value to me. If friends or teammates are down, I make it my personal goal to spend time with them or even just text them something that will perk them up. For example, when my sister was nervous about finding her way around high school as an incoming freshman this year, I gave her a personal tour of the school and texted her directions to and from every one of her classes. When there's an opportunity to try something new or help when a teacher or coach needs it, I'm there. I don't do these things to get credit with my parents, teachers, or make a crowd laugh; I want to be there for the people I care about.

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When I reach my grandfather's age, I intend to look back on a life well-lived. I plan to make a difference. I will strive to help people and make them happy. My goal is to enjoy every minute, add value wherever I go, create the treasured memories my grandfather made during those long-gone days, and live life to the fullest.

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