

Accepting my Diagnosis

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If you believe 2012 doomsday theorists, the earth as we know it will end in 4 days on December 21, 2012. Whether it is from the end of the Mayan calendar or some incredible planetary collision, life on earth will end. Television movies depicting the end play over and over again. The news captures religious fanatics holding their signs high to “repent.” It has made me pause and wonder.

I do not believe in 2012 doomsday. I believe God has his own agenda.

It is in such stark comparison I contemplate my own inevitable death. Upon my diagnosis of FTD, I immediately went to my computer and began to research this foreign word. As I read through the text of symptoms I eventually hit the words “Inevitably FTD will culminate in profound disability and death.” The average life expectancy is anywhere from 2-10 years with the mean of 8. I reread this line of text numerous times. Three months since my diagnosis, these words continues to sink in.

I've known for years, there was something seriously wrong with me. I just didn't know what it was. Finally, I had a diagnosis to this terrible thing. My emotions have ranged from disbelief to anger to sadness.

The one thing that has remained constant from the start is my desire to live life to its fullest and with dignity. At the bottom of my calendar page, I have written the well-known line, “Live each day as if it's your last.” But, what does that really mean?

Words are just that – words. It is how we live those words that really matters. Each day, I wake up and count my blessings and thank God. I try to be more gentle with my words; tell my loved ones I love them; help out as much as I can; and not hesitate to take up people's invitations to an adventure. I ask myself, am I correctly prioritizing things I have to complete? I have begun to reach out to some dear old friends who I have lost contact with. I have told special people in my life that they are special and my life is richer because they are in it. I do not take these relationships for granted. Laughter has become more important to me and I look to find and share things that will earn a smile. I continue to work hard to ensure that my family is left in the best circumstances it can be. I reach out to organizations that can help me move through challenges. And ultimately, each day, I try to give as much as I can to help in the fight against dementia.

I ponder about what my purpose of life is. Is helping in this fight it? Regardless, I will continue to live each and every day the best I can. I have accepted my diagnosis. It is the helping of others to aid in their acceptance of my diagnosis that is paramount.

My great niece, Teighan, recently presented me with a beautiful painting she had done herself. On it, she painted the words, “Carpe Diem.” I have hung her painting up near the entrance of our home. As

each and every person enters, I wish for them to join me in: *seizing the day and place no trust in tomorrow.*