I knew that my family was in trouble when the neurologist told me that my wife probably had Alzheimer's. With the pandemic, it took another two years to get the final diagnosis, but I felt I was drowning emotionally far earlier than that.

As my wife's personality changed, the cheerful woman that I had married would argue and pick fights with everyone who loved her. She grew to be dissatisfied and unhappy about everything, and I grew more frantic. I began to hate who she'd become. My wife was gone forever, and it felt like I was left with a disagreeable stranger to take care of. I felt terribly isolated from my family and friends because they didn't seem to understand what the disease was like to live with. I also started to hate myself. I'd think "if only I were a better human being" I'd be more patient, more loving, and not find myself screaming on a daily basis at the woman I loved.

My wife disliked other caregivers coming into the house, and when that didn't work, we came to Lyngblomsten's program, The Gathering. Their staff provide a safe space to help families. The person with dementia finds friendly people who genuinely care about them. Caregivers find a welcoming staff who really "get it". Their support groups for caregivers provide a safe space to share our situations, learn about resources, and to know that we are not on this journey alone. I know that I can say anything in that group and be accepted. We spend a great deal

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of time laughing about some pretty horrible situations. That group has helped me stay sane over many stressful times. When things at home finally deteriorated to the point where I knew it was time to place the love of my life in a memory care setting, The Gathering staff helped me realize that I was not a failure as a man or a husband—only that I was just another victim of this horrible disease.

The disease progresses differently for everyone who has dementia, and our stories are all different, but they all share the pain of losing someone that you love —
long before they pass away.

Tom Brazill

Husband, Caregiver, Retired Social Worker, and
Participant in Lyngblomsten Community Services
programs for family/informal caregivers