



# **Wisdom Gone Wild**

## **DELVE DEEPER READING LIST**



**This list of fiction and nonfiction books, compiled by Constance Zack of the School Library Association of Rhode Island, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the POV documentary *Wisdom Gone Wild*.**

A vibrant tender cine-poem, a filmmaker collaborates with her Nisei mother as they confront the painful curious reality of wisdom 'gone wild' in the shadows of dementia. Made over 16 years, the film blends humor and sadness in an encounter between mother and daughter that blooms into an affectionate portrait of love, care, and a relationship transformed.

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# ADULT NON-FICTION

**Koenig-Coste, Joanne. *Learning to Speak Alzheimer's: a Groundbreaking Approach for Everyone Dealing with the Disease*. Houghton Mifflin, 2004.** More than four million Americans suffer from Alzheimer's, and as many as twenty million have close relatives or friends with the disease. Revolutionizing the way we perceive and live with Alzheimer's, Joanne Koenig Coste offers a practical approach to the emotional well-being of both patients and caregivers that emphasizes relating to patients in their own reality. Her accessible and comprehensive method, which she calls habilitation, works to enhance communication between care partners and patients and has proven successful with thousands of people living with dementia. *Learning to Speak Alzheimer's* also offers hundreds of practical tips, including how to: cope with the diagnosis and adjust to the disease's progression, help the patient talk about the illness, face the issue of driving, make meals and bath times as pleasant as possible, adjust room design for the patient's comfort, deal with wandering, paranoia, and aggression.

**Kostiw, Debra. *Forget Me Not. Answers about Alzheimers*, 2022.** This down to earth guidebook provides clear and concise strategies for caregivers and family members including tips on how to handle disturbing behaviors, poor hygiene habits, argumentative episodes, issues with "sundowning," and how to maintain a positive and loving relationship with a challenging patient or family member.

**Landsverk, Elizabeth. *Living in the Moment: a Guide to Overcoming Challenges and Finding Moments of Joy in Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias*. Citadel, 2022.** Advice given here covers understanding the disease itself as well as ways to manage a patient's aggression and paranoia. There is advice on protecting the patient against elder abuse to creating a long-range plan for patients and caregivers that includes home care, assisted living, and hospice care. Offers a sensible plan with some new ways to minimize medication, treat pain, and relieve agitation.

**McTaggart, Patrick J. *Our Dementia Journey: A Collection of Heartfelt and Emotional Poems about One Family's Journey Including Messages of Hope and Advice for Those on the Same Journey*. Independent Press, 2022.** This collection of poems charts a family's experiences with dementia as they deal with their father's decline. It began as a means of emotional release for the author and helped him realize that sharing his family's experiences and feelings might be helpful and cathartic to others on the same journey.

**Miles, Margaret R. *The Long Goodbye: Dementia Diaries*. Cascade Books, 2017.** The author is committed to participating in the dementia experience of her spouse with positivity and a mind fully open to the whole experience. She finds there can be moments of great beauty, humor and new insights as family and friends share in the process. She presents the dementia journey as one which can be sad but also full of great moments of joy.

**Mitchell, Wendy. *Somebody I Used to Know*. Bloomsbury, 2019.** Wendy Mitchell offers a rare glimpse into what it feels like to experience early onset Alzheimer's. She had a busy job with the British National Health Service, raised her two daughters alone, and spent her weekends running and climbing mountains. Then, slowly, a mist settled deep inside the mind she once knew so well, blurring the world around her. She didn't know it then, but dementia was starting to take hold. In 2014, at age fifty-eight, she was diagnosed with young-onset Alzheimer's. She now devotes her time to educating others who are living with dementia. Still living independently, Mitchell now uses Post-it notes and technology to remind her of her routines and has created a "memory room" where she displays photos—with labels—of her daughters, friends, and special places. It is a room where she feels calm and happy, especially on days when the mist descends.

**Moller, Mary. *Alzheimer's Through the Stages: A Caregiver's Guide*. Althea Press, 2019.** This practical guide provides detailed and concise descriptions of the seven stages of the disease. Each section is clearly divided into three parts—what to expect, what to say, and what to do as the patient and caregiver progress through the stages.

**O'Brien, Greg. *On Pluto: Inside the Mind of Alzheimer's*. Codfish Press, 2014.** This is a book about living with Alzheimer's, not dying with it. It is a book about hope, faith, and humor—a prescription far more powerful than the conventional medication available today to fight this disease. Alzheimer's is the sixth leading cause of death in the US—and the only one of these diseases on the rise. More than 5 million Americans have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's or a related dementia; about 35 million people worldwide. Greg O'Brien, an award-winning investigative reporter, has been diagnosed with early-onset Alzheimer's and is one of those faceless numbers. Acting on long-term memory and skill coupled with well-developed journalistic grit, O'Brien decided to tackle the disease and his imminent decline by writing frankly about the journey. *On Pluto: Inside the Mind of Alzheimer's* is a trail-blazing roadmap for a generation—both a "how to" for fighting a disease, and a "how not" to give up!

**Southerly, Grace. *Dementia Behaviors—Caregivers' Survival Guide: Simple Proven Methods to Control and Defuse the Situation Before it Blows Up!* Independent Press, 2023.** Because caring for a dementia patient can drain you physically, mentally, and emotionally, this book addresses these concerns and gives practical, applicable advice to reduce angst and give the caregiver peace and understanding.

# ADULT FICTION

**Block, Stefan Merrill. *The Story of Forgetting*. Random House, 2008.** Abel Haggard is an elderly hunchback who haunts the remnants of his family's farm in the encroaching shadow of the Dallas suburbs, adrift in recollections of those he loved and lost long ago. As a young man, he believed himself to be "the one person too many"; now he is all that remains. Hundreds of miles to the south, in Austin, Seth Waller is a teenage "Master of Nothingness"—a prime specimen of that gangly, pimple-rashed, too-smart breed of adolescent that vanishes in a puff of sarcasm at the slightest threat of human contact. When his mother is diagnosed with a rare form of early-onset Alzheimer's, Seth sets out on a quest to find her lost relatives and to conduct an "empirical investigation" that will uncover the truth of her genetic history. Though neither knows of the other's existence, Abel and Seth are linked by a dual legacy: the disease that destroys the memories of those they love, and the story of Isidora—a fantasy world free from the sorrows of remembrance, a land without memory where nothing is ever possessed, so nothing can be lost. Through the fusion of myth, science, and storytelling, this novel offers a dazzling illumination of the hard-learned truth that only through the loss of what we consider precious can we understand the value of what remains.

**Genova, Lisa. *Still Alice*. Gallery Books, 2009.** Alice is at the height of her career when she notices a forgetfulness creeping into her life. As confusion starts to cloud her thinking and her memory begins to fail her, she receives a devastating diagnosis: early onset Alzheimer's disease. Fiercely independent, Alice struggles to maintain her lifestyle and live in the moment, even as her sense of self is being stripped away. *Still Alice* captures in remarkable detail what it's like to literally lose your mind.

**Healey, Emma. *Elizabeth is Missing*. Harper, 2014.** In a heartbreakingly honest meditation on memory, identity, and aging, an elderly woman descending into dementia embarks on a desperate quest to find the best friend she believes has disappeared. Convinced Elizabeth is missing and in terrible danger, Maud's search for the truth will go back decades and have shattering consequences. As this singular obsession forms a cornerstone of Maud's rapidly dissolving present, the clues she discovers seem to lead to another unsolved disappearance: her sister, Sukey, who vanished shortly after World War II.

**Hepworth, Sally. *The Things We Keep*. St. St. Martin's Press, 2016.** Anna Forster, in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease at only thirty-eight years old, knows that her family is doing what they believe to be best when they take her to Rosalind House, an assisted living facility. She also knows there's just one other resident her age, Luke. What she does not expect is the love that blossoms between her and Luke even as she resists her new life at Rosalind House. As her disease steals more and more of her memory, Anna fights to hold on to what she knows, including her relationship with Luke. When Eve Bennett is suddenly thrust into the role of single mother she finds herself putting her culinary training to use at Rosalind house. When she meets Anna and Luke she is moved by the bond the pair has forged. But when a tragic incident leads Anna's and Luke's families to separate them, Eve finds herself questioning what she is willing to risk to help them.

**Sciucco, Marianne. *Blue Hydrangeas: an Alzheimer's Love Story*. Bunky Press, 2013.** Jack is committed to saving his marriage, his wife, and their life together from the devastation of Alzheimer's disease. He and Sara retired years ago to the house of their dreams, and operated it as a Cape Cod bed and breakfast named Blue Hydrangeas. Jack has made an impossible promise: he and Sara will stay together in their beautiful home no matter what the disease brings. However, after nine years of selfless caregiving, complicated by her progressing Alzheimer's and his own failing heart, he finally admits he can no longer care for her at home. With reluctance, he arranges to admit her to an assisted living facility. But, on the morning of admission, Sara is having one of her few good days, and he is unable to follow through. Instead, he takes them on an impulsive journey to confront their past and reclaim their future. In the end, he realizes that staying together at any cost is what truly matters.

# YOUNG ADULT NON-FICTION

**Cummings, Tam. *The Itty Bitty Dementia Book*. Independent Press, 2022.** This book presents a revolutionary new way to look at dementia. Provides a quick understanding of what it is and how behavior is affected with a focus on how to become a more effective and less stressed out caregiver. Easy-to-follow assessment tools are included to determine the stages of memory loss and to help determine the next stages of care.

**Honders, Christine. *What Happens When My Grandparent has Alzheimer's Disease?* Powerkids Press, 2020.** About 5.8 million Americans were living with this disease in 2019. Alzheimer's is often called a "family disease" because watching a loved one's health decline can affect the entire family. Understanding this situation can be especially difficult for children. Why doesn't grandma remember my name? Why did grandpa have to move into a care home? This book will help young readers understand what Alzheimer's disease is and provide them with healthy coping strategies.

# YOUNG ADULT FICTION

**Backman, Fredric. *And Every Day the Way Home Gets Longer and Longer: a Novella*. Atria, 2016**

Grandpa and Noah are sitting on a bench in a square that keeps getting smaller every day. The square is strange but also familiar, full of the odds and ends that have made up their lives: Grandpa's work desk, the stuffed dragon that Grandpa once gave to Noah, the sweet-smelling hyacinths that Grandma loved to grow in her garden. As they wait together on the bench, they tell jokes and discuss their shared love of mathematics. Grandpa recalls what it was like to fall in love with his wife, what it was like to lose her. She's as real to him now as the first day he met her, but he dreads the day when he won't remember her. Sometimes Grandpa sits on the bench next to Ted, Noah's father—Ted who never liked math, prefers writing and playing guitar, and has waited his entire life for his father to have time for him, to accept him. But in their love of Noah, they have found a common bond. Grandpa, Grandma, Ted, and Noah all meet here, in this peculiar space that is growing dimmer and more confusing all the time. And here is where they will learn to say goodbye, the scent of hyacinths in the air, nothing to fear.

**Cypress, Louise. *The Gift of Goodbye: A Story for Kids of All Ages Who Love Someone with Alzheimer's Disease*. Independent Press, 2018.**

Caleb will do anything to protect the people he loves--and his grandma is top of that list, especially now that she has Alzheimer's disease. After Emma accidentally insults Grams, Caleb lashes out and makes fun of Emma's dyslexia. Emma's best friend Sydney rushes to her defense, starting a girls versus boys cartoon war that involves the whole sixth grade. Pencils ready, students of Whitman Elementary, prepare to battle! When Sydney starts taking art lessons from Grams, she connects with Grams in a way that Caleb can't. Love, lost memories, and new friendships enable powerful conversations to happen, especially about the toughest topic of all—Alzheimer's disease.

**Rill, Eric. *An Absent Mind*. Lake Union, 2015.** Seventy-one, and a man used to controlling those around him, Saul struggles to make peace with his disconnected family before Alzheimer's consumes his sanity. His ramblings, humor, emotions, lucid moments, and confusion are laid bare, as well as the thoughts and feelings of his loved ones: his wife, Monique, conflicted and depressed...caring, yet angry; his daughter, Florence, compassionate, yet proper and reserved; his son, Joey, self-centered and narcissistic, seemingly indifferent to his family's challenges; and his doctor, an Alzheimer's specialist, who cares for Saul until his final days. From the beginning, Saul and his family know how it has to end, because no one has ever outsmarted Alzheimer's. But as they navigate the meandering road that will eventually bring Saul's demise, they leave behind their once disconnected lives and come together to weather their difficult journey.

**Snyman, Mark. *The Dementia Diaries: A Novel in Cartoons*. Jessica Kingsley, 2016.** Brie's Granddad has always been a serious man, never without a newspaper and knowing the answer to everything. But now he keeps losing track of the conversation, and honestly, Brie doesn't really know how to speak to him. At first, Fred was annoyed that Gramps had come to live with them as it meant he had to give up his room! But then he starts to enjoy watching old films with him and spending time together... although there's the small problem of Gramps calling him Simon. Follow the stories of Brie, Fred, and other young caregivers as they try to understand and cope with their grandparents' dementia at all

stages of the illness. Adapted from true stories, and supplemented with fun activities and discussion ideas, this book for children aged approximately 7-14 cuts to the truth of the experience of dementia and tackles stigma with a warm and open perspective.

# BOOKS FOR YOUNGER LEARNERS AND CHILDREN

**Cronan, K.J. *Aunt Rita: an Alzheimer Story for Young Children*. Nightingale, 2002.** Harry is in fourth grade and his favorite person is his great aunt Rita. Harry spends a lot of time with Aunt Rita, but when she becomes sick, he wonders if all of this will change.

**Elizabeth, J. *Will Grammy Remember Me?* Janice E. Snipe, 2021.** A young girl is worried and scared when her Grammy does not pick her up from school. After her parents explained that Grammy has Alzheimer's disease, the little girl is determined to help Grammy as Grammy had always helped her.

**Harrison, Kathryn. *Weeds in Nana's Garden: a Heartfelt Story of Love That Helps Explain Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias*. Flipturn Publications, 2016.** A young girl and her Nana hold a special bond that blooms in the surroundings of Nana's magical garden. Then one day, the girl finds many weeds in the garden. She soon discovers that her beloved Nana has Alzheimer's Disease; an illness that affects an adult brain with tangles that get in the way of thoughts, kind of like how weeds get in the way of flowers. As time passes, the weeds grow thicker and her Nana declines, but the girl accepts the difficult changes with love, and learns to take-over as the magical garden's caregiver. Extending from the experience of caring for her mother, artist Kathryn Harrison has created this poignant story with rich illustrations to candidly explore dementia diseases, while demonstrating the power of love. It is a journey that will cultivate understanding and touch your heart. After the story, a useful Question and Answer section is included.

**Scacco, Linda. *Always My Grandpa*. Imagination Press, 2006.** While spending a summer at his grandfather's, Daniel begins to understand what Alzheimer's disease is and how it is affecting not only Grandpa, but the entire family, as well.

**Schnurbush, Barbara. *Striped Shorts and Flowered Pants: a Story about Alzheimer's Disease for Young Children*. Magination, 2007.** Libby and Nana love to read stories and color pictures together. They plant the garden in spring and feed the songbirds. But Libby notices that Nana is forgetting the words in books. She's mixing up the names of birds. She's wearing clothes that don't match. When Libby's parents tell her about Alzheimer's disease, she begins to understand what is happening to Nana. With help, she finds ways to be with Nana and still do the things they love.

**Winstanley, Alex. *My Grandma Has Dementia*. Independent Press, 2021.** This book is aimed at children 4 to 11 years old and is based on the experiences of those living with dementia. Through rhyme and appealing illustrations, the book hopes to inspire children to talk openly about their experiences with dementia to help relieve their anxieties and fears.

**Zelinger, Laurie. *Please Explain Alzheimer's Disease to Me: a Children's Story and Parent Handbook about Dementia*. Loving Healing Press, 2021.** This book introduces the condition to children in a colorful, sensitive and gentle story, followed by a parent/caregiver section that supplies comprehensive information that adults can use to understand and plan for the course of the disease affecting their loved one. Dr. Zelinger, a board-certified psychologist for children, presents the situation to children in a warm, developmentally appropriate way using appealing characters of diversity, child friendly language and familiar scenes they can relate to, as well as scripts that parents can use when speaking to their child.