



West Island, Quebec, Dec. 23, 2023 – Story 2

INTERVIEWER: You spoke about families, and, you know, taking care of Alzheimer's patients. But one thing that happened during Covid was that families and loved ones were not allowed to visit. What was the impact then, for the residents and for the staff?

JAMES: Oh, boy. You saw it in their faces. Sometimes they get to see them through the window. Or, oh, it was like, see-thru dividers. But there wasn't that physical connection that humans need. We need that physical affection. When we touch someone else, it lets us know that they're there. When lets us know that there's something to love. There's something that loves us, right?

So that lack of touch really took a toll on the residents and from a staff perspective, just seeing that it, it was heartbreaking because certain people would react in different ways if they weren't able to see their families. You know, some people would get really, really down. And you know you want to help them as much as you can. But you don't know what to do sometimes, because you're new to that person. You don't know their routine. You don't know what might get them in a better mood, and while all the while you're taking care of them, they have this like frown on their face, and they just look really depressed.

And that makes you depressed. Being around depressed people makes you depressed. And you try your best, but not being able to see their loved ones or touch their loved ones, have that connection. It really didn't create a great atmosphere for the staff because it that feeling transfers on to other people, whether you wanted it to or not. And yeah, you just you want them to be happy, you want them to have a great quality of life, but when they aren't allowed to be with their family it feels like you're not able to be with your family.

INTERVIEWER: Hmm.

JAMES: Because you live through them. You live through their happiness, you live through their safety, you live through their comfort. You try and give all that to them as much as possible. When it's taken away from them. It's taken away from you, in a certain way.

And I was just thinking. Yeah, my first day on stage. It was just a lot of lot of stuff, and I was trying to take in all the information, and I just went home. And it was just, "Wow, okay, that's a lot." And then I went back the second day, and I had actually had a chance to, you know, talk and be with some of the residents there, and I'd see their pictures of when they're younger, and how much more alive some of them looked.

And, you know, I I'm an emotional guy, and I can, you know, cry not easily, but I can cry a little more than other guys would like to admit. But that second day I came, I came home and I just got into the into the bath bathtub, and I sobbed for like an hour and a half. It was devastating. And on, on some levels, I was just thinking about, you know, what their families would have been going through, just losing that those parts of their fathers, their mothers, their sisters, their brothers, losing some of those sparks that made

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them who they were. And I was just thinking of how that would feel if it were my parents, right? And yeah, I was just completely shattered. And I got a good cry. Yeah.

After that, I really didn't get too emotional about it. I you know, I just, I kind of accepted that's how it is, and you just want to try and give them the best they deserve. Right? But yeah.

in some places. Time flies, you know. Time flies when you're having fun. And certain days. Yeah, you'd have a good time with the residents, you know, having fun activities and all that. But that year was one of the slowest years of my life.