



A Letter to Remember from Helen Rochford Brennan

Dear Helen,

You have come a long way since that dark day you were diagnosed with Early

Onset Alzheimer's and that lonely, bleak drive home from the doctor's office.

First it was forgetting words, stopping mid-sentence, wondering what you were about to say, covering up, forgetting appointments. Then it was taking three days to write something to now taking three weeks. You had a wonderful life Helen, it was full of love and then it became filled with the deepest sadness as life's adventure came to

an abrupt and unexpected halt.

There were often times when you wished you had cancer instead of Alzheimer's, because you know that people would have treated you differently.

But Helen, you have been fighting hard for people with dementia to be afforded the dignity of living well in their own homes. As an advocate, you know you are making a difference, so I am writing to you to tell you to keep working, keep fighting, because all the time you are doing this Alzheimer's is attacking you and all you have worked for.

*...don't let this
disease define
who you are.*

Yes, you had a wonderful career, an active life and then it was almost impossible to accept that all that was in the past and that life would never be as it was. Yes, I know the future still terrifies you, but you must continue to be bright, to be positive, both for yourself and your family whom you love so dearly.

Keep up your advocacy work for as long as you possibly can Helen, because nothing will change until we bring dementia out of the shadows. You have been a community activist for

as long as you can remember, and now you fighting for your own rights, and for the rights of everybody with this horrendous illness.

If you put your emotions to one side and continue to tell your story the rewards are huge. Not for you, but for all those people living with dementia. As an advocate you are helping to create a better quality of life that, someday, we will all benefit from.

Never give up as long as you have breath in your body and don't let this disease define who you are. You have done so much since those early days. Through the help and support of The Alzheimer Society of Ireland, you have made many new friends, travelled to tell the world that Alzheimer's isn't a death sentence. With the right supports we can live with this condition, we can put one foot in front of the other, we can walk, breathe, even stop to smell the roses.

Do everything in your power Helen to enjoy each precious moment you have left. Life presents many new challenges and will never be as it was, but be grateful that you are still here. You are still Helen.

As the author Jim Rohn sagely points out: *"You cannot change the circumstances, the seasons, or the wind, but you can change yourself. That is something you have charge of."*

Love,
Helen Rochford Brennan

