

## **"The most important thing to know if you're suffering from Alzheimer's is to lean on your family..."**

**-Tracy Mobley, 40**

tion, there was a numbness, a tingling on the side of my head. I'd be tired and confused," she said. "Now I know my limits and rest. I push myself a lot and I had to learn not to do that."

Safety and independence is one issue that Mobley's husband has had to strike a balance with. "I'm overprotective at times," said Allen. "It's hard for me not to be that way. I want her to be safe. It makes me feel better for someone to watch her while I'm at work." His mother, Shirley, has been helpful by seeing to Tracy's needs while he works 12-hour night shifts at Solo/Sweetheart Cup.

Mobley says she's forgetting how to do daily tasks and even who she once was. "I don't remember what I was really like. I no longer balance the checkbook. I can't drive alone. I have to have someone with me when I cook or clean house. The things you take for granted, when you can't do them without someone by your side, it's very hard."

The couple has found help through the support groups they attend through the Alzheimer's Association and internet chat lines where Tracy can communicate with others facing early onset Alzheimer's. "The support group here is awesome," said Mobley. "We laugh, joke, talk and sometimes cry together."

The caregivers support group has been invaluable to Allen Mobley. "You learn you're not in this alone and you realize you're not the only one," he said. "You make friends and find that it's okay to talk about it and you draw strength from that."

Allen Mobley says that it's a challenge to grasp when someone you once knew as organized and razor sharp does not comprehend you. "It's like being on a roller coaster," he said. "It's very hard not to argue because you remember someone totally functional just a few years ago. If you're not able to communicate and accept support it will destroy your family. Every day we have to do that. It's a challenge but we will get through this the best we can."

Tracy Mobley sees the need for a support group for children. "Children need to understand what their parents are going through and a support group would be helpful. They need to understand none of

it is their fault and to have all their questions answered." Answering those questions is the hardest thing for Tracy. "There is no cure. We haven't told him everything about how the disease progresses. My goal is to get him to a point in his life where I can explain it to him." Austin gives her a life purpose, Mobley added. "I finally realized why taking my medication is so important. It's another day for him. It's important to make memories to leave for your family. We go places and we make him laugh. I don't want him to think of me as a bad or angry mom. I want to make memories that they can hold on to and look back on."

While Austin attends school, Mobley stays active with hobbies, support groups and promoting her book. "All of that is very therapeutic," Tracy explains. The book has been especially helpful in filling her time as well as healing. She says without the encouragement of Judee Stewart and others at the Southwest Missouri Chapter of the Alzheimer's Association, she may have never seen the book in print. Linda Tucker helped Mobley organize the chapters of the book. "Writing the book helped on bad days especially," she said. "The only bad response I've had from the book was from my mother. She was offended. I love my family very much and I hoped the book would help us out."

The most important thing to know if you're suffering from Alzheimer's is to lean on your family, Tracy Mobley advised. "Let them support you and don't push them away. I'm learning to lean on them, to live for the moment because no one knows what tomorrow holds. Seek support and advice. Keep an open mind and educate yourself. Learn as much as you can about the disease."

Still, Mobley struggles with periods of anger toward her family, mostly because of the frustration from the loss of independence. Comprehension and reasoning is deteriorated by the disease. At times it's difficult for Tracy to understand her family only has her safety in mind.

Tracy sees a lot of hope for the future. Though she is against stem cell research, she sees hope in new drugs and in treatment and diagnosis. She passes her time



*Tracy, Austin and Allen Mobley.*

with hobbies like cross stitch and fishing.

Looking at the disease as having a purpose and being a blessing in her life gives Tracy the most understanding. "I've made a lot of friends through this disease," she said. "I have strong faith and I believe that there is a reason for everything that happens. I told a friend once that this is God saying to me, 'Listen to me! This is your purpose, to help others with this disease whose families are in denial.' If my book can save one life, one family, from unnecessary pain, it's worth it."

The disease has also brought her closer to Allen, she added. "We have talks, we hold each other and there's a lot of tears," Allen Mobley said. "It's what I signed on for, sickness and health. It's not something she asked for. If the tables were turned, she'd be here for me."

Mobley doesn't spend much time mourning her lost dreams. "The goal of the nursing degree... I never did get there. But now I have the ability to help a lot of people."

In her book, Mobley talks about the legacy she wants to leave behind and she speaks for many Alzheimer's sufferers who can no longer speak for themselves. "I know my family must go on without me when I'm gone and the only comfort I can find in that is I will no longer be here to cause them pain by them having to watch me slowly slip away. I know that they will have memories to look back on and laugh and maybe even cry about but through them I know my spirit will live on. I think that this is what gives me the most inner peace and I know that through my son, a part of me will always live on."

*(Young Hope* by Tracy Mobley is available at Borders and Heritage book stores and Barnes and Noble online or through Emerald Falcon Press at [www.emerald-falconpress.com](http://www.emerald-falconpress.com)).  
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