A Thousand Tomorrows — Intimacy, Sexuality and Alzheimer's

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Daddy's Girls is about feeling wanted and loved. The video effectively captures the personal reflections of six daughters who describe the very strong roles their fathers played in their lives. These reflections are interspersed with some insightful thoughts from three of the fathers who are still living. The daughters range in age from adolescence to middle age and the fathers have roles that range from instrumental provider, to protector/supporter, to need care recipient.

A number of well balanced themes are presented. The father as protector who will "move heaven and earth for you," "make me feel safe," and "wait up after a date" is balanced by dads who are too busy and/or give more attention to sons. Anorexia is seen as a desire to get dad's attention, and a Harvard study is cited in which highly achieving professional women were treated by their fathers androgynously, i.e., "This is how you do it, I'll show you." The kicker was that none of the daughters in the Harvard study had brothers! The daughters' struggle to let go. The experiences of the daughters and fathers in this video offer very rich content for discussion. For example, one woman suggests that since dads are daughters' first loves, what they give or don't give will shape their daughters' love life in a surprisingly predictable way. How is it that fathers are instrumental in relationships with their daughters? How does their support manifest itself? How is it experienced by daughters? What have daughters had to do to achieve in spite of negative experiences?

The stories and situations portrayed are very down to earth and real. They easily help viewers get in touch with the impact that Daddies had on the efforts, behaviors, and goals developed by daughters. This video would be a good trigger for discussion with cohort-specific groups of daughters of any age or of younger fathers, especially those whose daughters have not yet reached full adulthood. It could be a helpful catalyst for discussion for self-help groups and for group therapy sessions.

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A Thousand Tomorrows shows four families who are coping with Alzheimer's disease. The couples discuss their sexuality and intimacy and how the disease which afflicts one partner affects both of them. A wide range of intimacy and sexuality is portrayed, from the partners who are not sexually active and have little sexual interest to the partner with Alzheimer's disease who wants to be sexually active at least 2–3 times a day.

The caregivers appear frank and honest in their responses to the interviewer while discussing their personal sexual lives. The caregivers report their relationships with spouses as loving and caring but different since Alzheimer's disease has become a part of their lives. They have come to a level of acceptance of the disease and realize that there is nothing they can do to change its progression or restore their spouse's memory. Being in the primary role of caregiver makes it increasingly difficult for many of them to view the dependent spouse as a sexual partner or to have the energy to want to be sexually active.

The caregivers have a variety of responses to their spouse's sexual advances, from little interest, to not wanting to deny the person sexual pleasure in life, to enjoyment. Throughout the video, the couples seem caring and loving even though intimacy and sexuality might have changed for some of them.

The caregivers value humor, provide support for their spouses, and understand that the disease will not stay constant but will continue to take its toll. Thus, they value the time they have and realize the present is precious.

The video's strengths include the candidness of the caregivers and the way their love is captured. The second half of the video provides more factual information and more depth in the interviews. The organization of the video might have been enhanced by changing the order of the family interviews and providing additional factual information at the beginning.

A Thousand Tomorrows would be helpful for Alzheimer support groups and support group leaders. It discusses sexuality, which is a topic that is difficult for many people to openly express, and it provides support for a wide range of intimate feelings and actions. This video also may be useful for professionals and paraprofessionals who work with this population to understand that intimacy and sexuality may change with the progression of the disease but do not disappear entirely.

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