

QUESTION 4

MY HUSBAND HAS DEMENTIA. I HAVE NO INTENTION OF PUTTING HIM IN A NURSING HOME AND CANNOT IMAGINE WHY ANYONE SHOULD BE SUGGESTING THAT I SHOULD. SURELY I AM NOT MEANT TO ABANDON MY RESPONSIBILITIES TO HIM AFTER FIFTY YEARS OF MARRIAGE?'

The principal reason why the nursing home suggestion is made is that your husband has dementia, and this fact turns the normal commonsense reasoning on its head. We have learned over the years that common sense – something we all rely on when dementia is not present – simply does not work when it comes to managing dementia and planning dementia care. Dementia is best seen as a disability which increasingly affects the person's ability to access the facts of what has just been happening only moments before in their life. This single change has an enormous knock-on effect in so many areas of life: carers who continue to apply common sense, resisting the counter-intuitive shift into what we call SPECAL sense, will find themselves, sooner or later, facing crisis situations which could have been avoided with a different approach. One of the key findings of the Royal College of Nursing evaluation of the SPECAL method was that planning for a move at some point in the future results in families keeping their person at home for far longer than would otherwise be the case.

If you are able to get to one of our Family & Friends courses, you would have an opportunity to explore this issue in the depth it deserves. You might also like to purchase the DVD of our 'Understanding Dementia' film and see how other carers have successfully grappled with this difficult issue.