

What picture do I paint?

Today, there is a choice for me. I can choose to paint the outline of my days in the way that I choose. Do I paint the picture that shows all that I have lost, or the picture that shows all that I am, and have. Perhaps what you see will depend just as much on how you feel today.

Today, I think that what I have is greater than what I have lost. The dementia bugger does not yet define me. He is my unwelcome companion on this part of my life's journey.

When I wake, the dementia bugger can sometimes take my sense of knowing where I am, what day it is. So it takes time to wrestle it back. Helped by my family and, of course, the legion of medication that stands ready for action in my 28-compartment drug box.

The World turns, the sun rises and sets. I love hearing the birds in the morning, so I sit and watch them in the garden, not always remembering if it is a chaffinch or a sparrow, but taking pleasure from their eager, energetic drive to make the best of the day.

I focus on now, on this moment, and all that I have, and all that I can hear, see, smell and touch. Taking pleasure in being part of activities: washing up, putting the washing out on the line, sharing my pocket watch with my 3-year-old grandson so that he holds it to his ear and says very quietly, 'Tick tock, grandad'. Ordinary things, everyday things.

My list for the supermarket is shorter now, safer for everyone. And if on my own, I must only go to a manned checkout. No hand-held scanners. They were fun, but not so when trolleys are checked and faces pulled.

My mobile phone doesn't ring much, but that's OK. I take it with me as it tracks my movements. So, if necessary, it will ring with my wife asking where am I going. Just like my son says to my grandson: 'Where are you going little man?'.

The dementia bugger makes me say: 'Did you ask me to do that? I am so sorry, I must have forgotten, I will do it now.' 'Oh yes, they did say something about that. I know I should have written it down.'

The dementia bugger takes the last chapter of my book from my memory so that I have to read it again. But I have my revenge by reading two more chapters.

He is not going away, so I tolerate him, sometimes being able to keep him out of the room, conversation, or moment. I know I fear him, but he doesn't know that. So, I will keep him in his place by being me, trying new things, smiling at people who make me happy, telling people how I feel.

So what does my picture look like?