

## **"If I Get Dementia..."**

"If I Get Dementia" is a poignant poem by Rachael Wonderlin that expresses the wishes and feelings of individuals facing dementia, emphasizing the importance of compassion and understanding from loved ones.

The poem serves as a heartfelt reminder of the emotional and psychological challenges faced by individuals with dementia. It emphasizes the need for empathy, patience, and respect from caregivers and family members. The requests made in the poem highlight the importance of maintaining dignity and connection, even as cognitive abilities decline. It resonates deeply with many families dealing with dementia, providing a voice to the often-unspoken fears and desires of those affected by the condition.

1. If I get dementia, please introduce yourself; don't ask if I know who you are. If I don't know, please do not take it personally. My timeline is confusing to me.
2. If I get dementia, I want my friends and family to embrace my reality. If I think my spouse is still alive, or if I think we're visiting my parents for dinner, let me believe those things. I'll be much happier for it.
3. If I get dementia don't argue with me about what is true for me, versus what is true for you.
4. If I get dementia, I don't want to be treated like a child. Talk to me like the adult that I am.
5. If I get dementia and can no longer use utensils, switch me to a finger-good diet so I can continue to feed myself.
6. If I get dementia, I still want to enjoy the things that I've always enjoyed. Help me find a way to exercise, read, and visit with friends.
7. If I get dementia, ask me to tell you a story from my past.
8. If I get dementia, and I become agitated, take the time to figure out what is bothering me.
9. If I get dementia and am sad or anxious, hold my hand and listen. Do not tell me my feelings are unfounded.
10. If I get dementia, treat me the way that you would want to be treated.
11. If I get dementia, make sure that there are plenty of snacks for me in the house. Even now if I don't eat I get angry, and if I have dementia, I may have trouble explaining what I need.
12. If I get dementia, don't talk about me as if I'm not in the room.
13. If I get dementia, don't feel guilty if you cannot care for me 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It's not your fault, and you've done your best. Find someone who can help you, or choose a great new place for me to live.
14. If I get dementia, and I live in a dementia care community, please visit me often.
15. If I get dementia, don't act frustrated if I mix up names, events, or places. Take a deep breath. It's not my fault.