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## THE SOUL OF FORGETFULNESS

“At the heart of our proposal lies a shift in how to understand and approach dementia, starting with the term itself,” write Nader Robert Shabahangi and Bogna Szymkiewicz in their new book, *Deeper Into the Soul: Beyond Dementia and Alzheimer’s Toward Forgetfulness Care* (San Francisco: Elders Academy Press, 2008). The authors continue, “Rather than this often stigmatizing and demeaning label, we prefer *forgetfulness*.”

The slim volume is a practical guide for people who work and live with relatives or facility residents with dementia. The authors offer ideas and tips for dealing with symptoms, such as aggression and wandering, through conversations between four cartoon figures—a sage, a residential care trainee, a psychologist-social worker and a physician-researcher, each of whom sees forgetfulness from a different viewpoint. Although these characters are amusingly drawn, they broach serious day-to-day issues, as well as the deeper existential questions: What are the possible meanings of forgetfulness? What purpose does it serve for both caregiver and the one experiencing forgetfulness?

The authors state, “Rather than simply a disease, forgetfulness has purpose and meaning; rather than simply being in need of our care, people with forgetfulness can teach us about life and living; rather than a burden, people with dementia offer us an opportunity to slow down, to be more open and caring, to get in touch with the essence of our human nature.” Visit the Elders Academy Press website at [www.pacificinstitute.org/el\\_dits.html](http://www.pacificinstitute.org/el_dits.html). ❖