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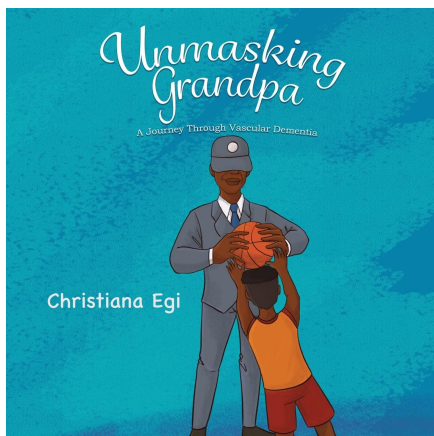
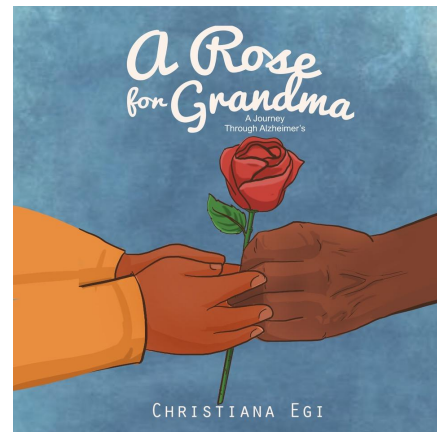
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Children's Book Author Christiana Egi Destigmatizes Dementia

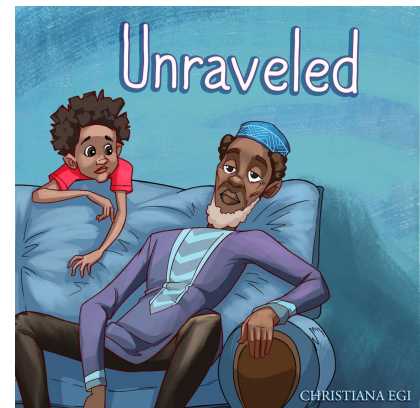
Dementia Advocate Christiana Egi has taken a different approach to raising awareness about dementia and Alzheimer's—through writing children's books.

Egi is the Executive Director of Alexis Lodge, a Toronto, Canada, care home built on love, respect, and dignity for the cognitively impaired.

She began penning her stories in early 2021 with the release of *A Rose For Grandma: A Journey Through Alzheimer's* — “a heartwarming story of a young Toronto girl, Annie, whose beloved grandmother is diagnosed with dementia. Although Annie is scared, devastated, and confused, she commits to doing everything she can to help her grandmother.”



Unmasking Grandpa: A Journey Through Vascular Dementia was published in September 2022. In this story, Grandson Tony isn't sure how to act when Grandpa is diagnosed with vascular dementia and starts acting a little differently. In time, Tony discovers that Grandpa is still an amazing person who deserves respect and love.



Egi's latest creation is *Unraveled*, which explores how families adjust to not one but two older family members needing assistance. Here, Sarah is concerned that Grandpa is showing signs of a mental health condition similar to her grandma. As days pass, it's harder and harder for Grandma

and Grandpa to do the things that help them feel well. The family has to work together to find out what's really wrong with Grandpa before his condition gets even worse.

The native of Nigeria, her parents modeled the value of helping others. “From the way I was brought up, I don't like injustice. I just like fairness. So, when I saw that people with mental illness were being treated unfairly, I decided in my mind to try and do what I could to eradicate the stigma around mental illness,” she says.

And that's what she did in her early career. After graduating from nursing school, Egi migrated to Canada in 1987 and worked in institutions for the mentally ill, many of whom were schizophrenic. Despite being told horror stories, she discovered that behind the diagnosis were people.

“You don't give birth to a schizophrenic; you give birth to a child, a beautiful, intelligent human being,” she says. “Most are actually very intelligent. Then, when they get to university, between 16 or 18 to 24, they have their first breakdown. So does that make them less human?”

Egi applies the same thinking to those suffering from Alzheimer's and other types of dementia, which is behind her passionate drive to end the stigma around these diseases. The invaluable experience coupled with the gap in resources and support for people with mental illness led her to starting Alexis Lodge in 1999. “I knew that what I learned from caring for people with mental illness, I could use that experience to take care of seniors and give them a home-like environment where we can manage behaviours and help them live with dignity,” she explains.

Paying it forward is one way that Egi honors her parents, who died when she was in her young adult years. She and her now-deceased husband,



Anthony, founded Alexis Lodge in 1999 to achieve the goal of providing an alternative to institutionalized care for those with dementia, Alzheimer's, and other disorders of the mind. “In spite of the diagnosis of dementia, they can still be respected, and they are just like you and me, and they are fun,” Egi adds.

A Registered Nurse, Diabetes Educator, Registered Natural Health Nutritionist, and Geriatric and Mental Health Specialist, Egi is also the co-host of the biweekly podcast *Forever*

Young with Cherrie-Marie Chiu (ALS Double Play). She dives into conversations with other experts about mental and physical wellness. A mother and grandmother, Egi is a woman of faith. She uses her belief as a guide to help others appreciate the little things in life and be thankful for them. She has a daily goal of putting a smile on someone's face. She has been known to start impromptu dance parties for her retirement home residents and bring home-cooked meals to friends and families throughout her community. She applies this belief to the care that she and

her awesome staff provide daily to individuals with Alzheimer's and other types of dementia. She always says that love and respect are the cornerstones of caring for an individual.

Visit her website for more information! <https://christianaegi.com/>