

# Rachael and Maria

## Still Here: A caregiver series

**RACHAEL:** It's, just kind of what you do, when you love someone. You want to make their life great...just the way they made your life great.

**MARIA:** My name is Maria Beers, and my mom was diagnosed with frontal temporal dementia in 2016, and she also had the dual diagnosis with ALS. I was just feeling super alone on the journey, and so like any millennial I turned to social media, and there was a really small community, and there was a girl that I started following because she wrote the most beautiful posts about her dad.

**RACHAEL:** My name is Rachael Martinez and I was a caregiver for my father, Frank, who was living with FTD for about...10, 11 years.

**MARIA:** I was in Boston, she's in LA, we're both young moms, caregiving for our parents who, you know, Frank, her dad was her nurturer, and my mom was the ultimate nurturer. And so, caring for them while caring for our kids, like, just such a unique experience that, I don't know, it's just the foundation for such a close-knit bond.

**RACHAEL:** Hearing, like, "Oh, my mom would put things in her mouth" and I'm, like, "Yeah, my dad does the same." When you connect with somebody that understands that embarrassment, it's not so embarrassing anymore.

**MARIA:** Becoming a mom while losing my mom, it was a really, really tough time in my life. I had really bad postpartum depression, I think as a result of caregiving while becoming a mom with really no support.

**RACHAEL:** There were plenty of times where I would take my kids down to see my dad, and I'm spoon-feeding my dad and then spoon-feeding my child. And I don't know anything more descriptive of a sandwich caregiver, or sandwich generation, than that. Nobody really talks about becoming a parent while you're losing one. We had been producing the podcast for 6 months, and I got a call early in the morning that my dad wasn't doing well and I should come down. I've been waiting for that call for 10 years, so it's still a shock.

**MARIA:** When you love someone with a progressive disease, you think you're prepared for the end, and in some ways you do, you know it's coming.

**RACHAEL:** I woke up at 5:10 in the morning, and he died at 5:11. I called Maria, we chatted, and days went on, and then, I get the call that Maria's mom's not doing well. So fast-forward a couple weeks, and Lia passed on December 11th. So they passed away 1 month, plus 1 day from each other.

**MARIA:** I think that death is really scary. You don't know what it's going to look like. You see a lot of things in movies. And, I think having Rachael prepare me and basically hold my hand and tell me that it's going to be peaceful and that it's going to be okay—I can't even explain, like, what that meant to me.

**RACHAEL:** There's going to be an end to it. This is not your role forever. When it does end, whoever you're caring for moves on. You as their caregiver are going to be okay.

**MARIA:** So I always looked to my mom to be, like, that strength for me and that cheerleader. And even when she was sick, if she saw I was crying, and she just touched my arm, I just felt like everything's going to be okay. Through this caregiving journey and my friendship with Rachael, I've learned to, like, be that for myself and just to find that, like, in me.

**RACHAEL:** I never realized as a child or even, like, a young adult, that the bitter and the sweet can coincide. And, this experience has been front-row seat to that.