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Memory Lessons: A Doctor's Story

Jerald Winakur

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Memory Lessons: A Doctor's Story Jerald Winakur
"Jerald Winakur poignantly brings together his personal and professional lives in this healing work, a deeply humane and utterly forthright book of memories, lessons, and revelations."
--Edward Hirsch, author of *Special Orders: Poems*

"*Memory Lessons* is a beautifully written and moving book that is both personal and universal."
--Christine K. Cassel, M.D., president of the American Board of Internal Medicine

"A beautifully written account by a physician son describing his father's decline from Alzheimer's, *Memory Lessons* is a wise and lasting treatise about sickness and health, life and death, and the redeeming power of love."
--Abraham Verghese, author of *My Own Country* and *The Tennis Partner*

"*Memory Lessons* is a searing, heartbreaking, and beautifully written account of a physician's battle against Alzheimer's -- among aging patients in general, but more personally as the disease slowly steals Dr. Winakur's own father. Like all fine literature, this is finally a book about what it means to be human."
--Tim O'Brien

The story of becoming a doctor, and being a son.

Jerald Winakur is a doctor who cares for, and about, the elderly. Dedicated and compassionate, he's a surrogate son to many. And yet, all his years of service helping patients and their families adjust to the challenges of aging did not prepare him for becoming father to his own father, who had become as needy as any child.

In *Memory Lessons*--a tender and provocative book--Dr. Winakur writes about what it's like to be medical counselor to countless patients, while disclosing his personal heartbreak at watching his 86-year-old father descend into disability and dementia, his mother at his side. In both of these roles--highly skilled professional and loving son--he finds he is hard pressed to alter a course that devastates his dad and tears at his family. But he does what he can. A doctor who does his best to listen carefully to each patient in turn, who attempts to confront every problem with, as he says, "a reasonable fund of knowledge, a modicum of common sense, and a large dose of honesty," Dr. Winakur knows that there is much we can do by loving and listening.

We all search for answers; we all want to do the right thing for our parents, but few of us know what that right thing is. Faced with caring for a growing sea of elders, Dr. Winakur reflects on his thirty years in the medical profession to consider the very personal and immediate questions asked by families every day: What are we going to do with Dad? Who will care for him--and how? These are urgent questions, and they're faced head-on in *Memory Lessons* with unflinching honesty, hope, and, above all, love.

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