

COPING WITH MILD COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENT (MCI) - Mary Jordan

According to the author, Mary Jordan, it was her military background, NHS administrative experience and working for a medical publishing company that gave her the skills to begin writing. However, it was her experience in caring for her mother-in-law with dementia that spawned her initial interest in cognitive decline. She worked for nine years as a trainer with the Alzheimer's Society, UK, and was involved in the management of a memory clinic for two years. Currently, she is an independent dementia trainer working with several organisations including AdaptDementia which she co-founded.

This is a self-help book that targets those with a diagnosis of Mild Cognitive Impairment (MCI) or those experiencing memory difficulties. That said, it also describes dementia thereby cleverly reassuring worried readers that their memory problems are not necessarily dementia-related.

It is very much at an introductory level and easy to read. The avoidance of technical jargon and complicated medical terms takes cognisance of readers who do not need long explanations or complex sentences at this worrying time.

Consisting of 10 stand-alone chapters, it allows the reader to dip in and out. Consequently, the author revisits the same subjects and advice. The topics include descriptive definitions, physical health, lifestyle, practical advice, and thinking about the future in the event of a dementia diagnosis. It also touches on factors that potentially make cognition worse e.g. some medications, other illnesses and infections which mimic dementia.

Some legal issues such as will making, power of attorney and advanced decision making, concerning UK law only are superficially discussed providing a basis from which the reader can explore these at a later date. It opens up conversations on sensitive issues such as moving into a care home, ceasing driving and talking to close relatives about future wishes. She refers to the general belief that those with MCI have a window of opportunity to take steps now to slow and possibly halt further cognitive decline thereby instilling hope in readers.

The book examines factors that may help to improve cognition such as dealing with sleep problems, lowering stress levels and having adequate exercise etc. These are practical lifestyle changes the reader can make. One weakness is the chapter outlining memory aids. While helpful, had little depth and the reader could be left mistakenly thinking there was not much more. The final chapter lists a range of information sources, online advice and support organisations inviting the reader to continue to build their knowledge.

The overall tone of this book is gentle and compassionate providing an overview for those recently diagnosed with MCI who have not yet explored or realised the potential impact of their diagnosis. It outlines the important issues in the hope that the reader will investigate these further.