



Dream New Dreams: Reimagining My Life After Loss

Jai Pausch

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A remarkably frank, deeply moving, and inspiring memoir by Jai Pausch, whose husband, Randy, wrote the bestseller *The Last Lecture* while battling pancreatic cancer.

"Jai is such a giver that she often forgets to take care of herself," Randy Pausch wrote about his wife. "Jai knows that she'll have to give herself permission to make herself a priority."

In *Dream New Dreams*, Jai Pausch shares her own story for the first time: her emotional journey from wife and mother to full-time caregiver, shuttling between her three young children and Randy's bedside as he sought treatment far from home; and then to widow and single parent, fighting to preserve a sense of stability for her family, while coping with her own grief and the challenges of running a household without a partner. Jai paints a vivid, honest portrait of a vital, challenging relationship between two strong people who faced a grim prognosis and the self-sacrificing decisions it often required. As she faced life without the husband she called her "magic man," Jai learned to make herself a priority to create a new life of hope and happiness—as she puts it, to "feel a spark of my own magic beginning to flicker."

Dream New Dreams is a powerful story of grief, healing, and newfound independence. With advice artfully woven into an intimate, beautifully written narrative, Jai's story will inspire not only the legions of readers who made *The Last Lecture* a bestseller, but also those who are embarking on a journey of loss and renewal themselves.

Dream New Dreams: Reimagining My Life After Loss Details

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Julie says

I wanted so much more and so much less from this book. The "more" I wanted was what was promised in the forward. "To shine a spotlight on the person in the treatment room who is so often overlooked, along with his or her needs and abilities." What Pausch delivered was a spotlight on herself and her journey. The "less" that I wanted was her take on the information presented in "The Last Lecture." Clearly her husband (author of "TLL") wanted his children to learn of him through that book and now they'll have what is likely a more realistic reflection to compare, but at the cost of bits of sadness. What grown child would want to read about how his father put his work ahead of them?

The book works so well when the author talks about the after time, the funeral, the reaching out for help that helped her from checking out with her grief. But the book is not universal and her experience as it is related here is not a book that will help build an understanding or change in the way caregivers are seen or treated by the medical community.

Heather says

I'm not sure what I expected from this book, but I don't feel it met my expectations. Like Jai Pausch (widow of "Last Lecture" author Randy Pausch), I know what it's like to meet the man you think you are going to spend the rest of your life with, only to have that plan cut way too short by his death. Unlike Jai, however, I lost mine to a heart attack and we didn't have kids so I didn't face the struggles of a caregiver or a soon-to-be single parent.

I guess I thought this book would be more inspirational and that I would relate more to Jai. I usually don't read reviews others have left (other than those left by my friends) before I start a book because I don't want to be influenced one way or another. I did notice, however, when I marked this one as "currently reading" the first few reviews were only 1-star. About halfway through the book, I read a couple of them and I was relieved to find I wasn't the only one who felt that at times, Jai comes across as very selfish in this book. I'm not discounting what she went through, but I found myself thinking about all those men and women who assume the role of caregiver while raising children and holding down jobs because they don't have a nanny, a babysitter, friends and family right down the street and they aren't independently wealthy: those who have to do it all without help. I also found myself questioning this great love she and Randy shared because she didn't always paint him in the most positive light. Nobody is perfect but I felt as though there was some resentment there. (I didn't agree with the others who criticized her for not taking the children to Houston, however, maybe because I don't have kids, and I did wonder if some of them even read the part about how she decided not to do that because they didn't have any help in Texas and she couldn't bring the kids to the hospital with her).

I did find I could relate to Jai a lot more in the chapters after Randy's death. It's amazing how grief will hit you when you think it won't: I too have experienced that overwhelming sense of loss while on vacation because it was a trip we were supposed to take together. That part really resonated with me, as did the part about being so overcome with grief it blurred the lines between people being supportive and showing how much they love me—that I wasn't as alone as I felt—vs feeling they were just pitying me. Reaching out to the empty space in bed, automatically asking advice from someone who isn't there? Been there, done that. I think

the biggest way in which I related to Jai, however, was feeling that loss would not define who I am.

Cancer is a horrible disease that I'd love to see researchers find a cure for. I can only imagine what a struggle it is to watch your loved one go through this and to be the primary source of care for them. I think I was expecting this book to be more of a survival guide with more resources and tips for how to survive being a caregiver, for it to be more uplifting than it was and for there to be more of an emphasis on the fight against pancreatic cancer specifically.

(Side note: "lying" is to not tell the truth. "Laying" is to lie down. The first time, I thought it was a typo. The second time, it just made me cringe).

Elinore says

I had a very hard time reading this book because I had lost my mom almost two years ago this December. My problem is that this woman, Jai Pausch, just isn't like me or anyone that I know. Cancer has touched my family in many different ways. My maternal grandmother passed away from ovarian cancer that spread to her lungs, my paternal grandfather suffered from colon/rectal cancer, and breast cancer has effected a good amount of people - including my mom who was cancer free when she passed away. But my problem with this book is that she kept sounding like some whining privileged woman. She was a homemaker with a nanny, why couldn't she help to look after her husband as well? My mom helped to take care of my grandmother while she also had a full time job and a child and husband at home. My aunt and uncle and their children helped, but my mom was the main one who did everything and they were living with her!

I cannot help but be frustrated because I was so excited to receive this book because I believed that she was thinking about caretakers, but what does she know when she has not been down in thick of it? All I can think of is when my mom had her amputation and my dad having to change her bandage (who else was going to do it?) and I don't think she knows anything of that anguish. What also bothered me as well, though it shouldn't, is that she is remarried and it's only been three years since her husband has passed away. I think that just creeped me out.

I'm going to try to go back to the book sooner or later, just because I never want to give up on a book fully - no matter what icky feeling it may give me.

Mediaman says

This depressing book proves that some things are better left unsaid. The wife of The Last Lecture guy pulls back the curtain on what life was really like, and in so doing reveals a very different picture of the "perfect husband and father" that Randy Pausch wanted to be remembered as. It's hard to understand why she would write this--she tells things about him that are so private and demeaning that they tarnish his memory. Her new husband (her third) certainly must not feel good by how she states that Randy was the only person she experienced "magic" with and the only one to ever make her feel certain feelings. And I pity the children when they grow up to read this, especially the youngest who Randy wanted to give up for adoption!

I won't go through the list of things that are wrong with this couple but will say that I do not respect how they acted as parents. In one case she claims to struggle with whether to abandon her three small children for two months to become Randy's caretaker in far-away Houston or stay with the children. Never mind the obvious solution of bringing the whole family to Houston! Or using the money they have to get help (she

states they were set financially for life and says they employed a nanny--so why not utilize what they already had to keep the family together?). She gives up on her kids and stays by her husband's side during treatments. Some will applaud this but it's hard to believe such highly educated people could not perceive the long-term damage to abandoned children, even if there were no short-term consequences.

And in the saddest section of the book she writes, "I don't recall Randy saying he missed the children during the time he spent in Houston." He was gone two months and never once said he missed his kids? That's just not normal and an indictment of a bad father. There are many other examples in the book where he was more interested in achieving his personal playful goals (with her support) while ignoring his children.

After about 50 pages I really didn't want to read any more. She certainly is putting her inner-most thoughts on paper, but it makes her very unattractive and unsympathetic. It's whiny and filled with self-pity, making her sound like a psychological basket case. She says her goal is to be a role model for those struggling with being caretakers and suffering loss, but instead she lacks the ability to inspire. Instead the book feels like a way for her to go through self-therapy while making quick money off his name. Randy, too, doesn't shine in this--he was a workaholic who was a control freak, cared more about intellectual solutions than feelings and left town for one week a month without prioritizing his family, not the ideal husband and dad.

It will, in the end, make you rethink The Last Lecture and realize that it was fantasy, like the Disney and virtual kingdoms that Randy was so fond of. The "secret" ending of The Last Lecture was that it was done entirely for his children--yet in one book their mother pulls the rug out from under them by not letting his memory rest in peace. His wife did nothing to improve his legacy but actually diminishes it by revealing very unattractive reality.

Richard Wagaman says

In my mind, if there ever was a book that should receive six stars it was Jai Pausch's new book--Dream New Dreams. It isn't often in one's lifetime that they get the chance to live their life through the pages of a book. That was the case with this book. Randy Pausch was a friend of mine for over 12 years. I never had the honor of meeting his wife, Jai, but I knew much about her due to Randy's obvious love for her. I learned about their children the same way.

When Randy's cancer was discovered in the summer of 2006, Jai and Randy had three children under the age of five (a newborn, a 22 month old and a four and half year old). They had been married less than six years. By this time I had known Randy for a little over ten years. The next 2 years, until his death in July 2008, were whirlwind of activity for the Pausch family. It was this whirlwind that formed the core of Jai's book. What it was like to see a Care Giver, a Mother of children under the age of seven and a Wife with little or no help.

The last hundred pages were dedicated to Jai and the children's recovery of the loss of a very rare individual--their husband and father. Randy loved people, but he loved his family the most! He always talked about about his family from the day that he met Jai until the day he died. Randy even created a list of good men for Jai to consider after he was gone--advise to men NEVER, EVER do this. Jai was furious with Randy, but quickly realized that this was one of the few ways that he needed to be comfortable in his life's final stages.

Please read this book.

If Randy was great in challenging the mind, Jai is equally great in touching the heart and soul. in this book.

Sara says

Jai Pausch, the wife of Randy Pausch who gave the speech and then wrote the book *The Last Lecture* about fulfilling childhood dreams, wrote this memoir about her experience falling in love with Randy, going through his cancer diagnosis, being his caregiver, and then trying to reestablish herself after his death. It's not necessary to have read *The Last Lecture* to appreciate this book; it's not a follow-up so much as it is a complementary memoir, showing Jai's perspective throughout the entire ordeal and how her life continued after his.

I found this book quite inspiring and think those who've served as a caregiver could definitely find comfort in it. She does an excellent job explaining how her life changed after he was diagnosed and the stress it put on their relationship, their family, and even impacted her own identity. She doesn't dwell in self-pity but makes it clear just how difficult this was for everyone. Neither Jai nor Randy comes off as perfect - they were very different people with different approaches to life - but their strong bond was evident throughout the book, even during stressful times, and it's easy to understand why she misses him so much. Many of the beautiful parts bringing Randy to life came near the beginning: Jai notes that to Randy, giving gifts isn't about spending money but about putting heart into it, and she later describes their weekend routine of making pancakes with freeform shapes, letting their kids decide what the pancakes resembled.

Probably half of the book (perhaps slightly more) covered her time with Randy, mostly after his diagnosis up until his death, and then it covered her time trying to adjust to life without him. This build up helped give a good overview of what her life as a caregiver had entailed and how difficult it was, yet how she was still not ready for him to die. Once he's gone, she no longer has the difficult task of caring for her husband along with their three young children but has the even harder task of taking care of three kids on her own without him, his absence looming large over everyone. Her struggle to tell their kids about Randy is particularly sad to read. Though she clearly has more resources than others in the same sort of situation (a paid-for home, a nanny, family and friends, financial support), she is not unaware of this and even notes within the pages that she's aware of how not everyone is so lucky.

Some of the strongest chapters were about her trying to adjust immediately after Randy died, wanting to reclaim the "magic" that he'd brought into her life and that seemed to disappear along with him. It was both inspiring and heartbreakingly to read about her solo and family trips to places they'd talked about. She also details opportunities that she'd seized after his death: redecorating, trading in a car she never liked, etc. - all trying to find hope where there didn't seem to be any.

Although I wish there had been a little more detail about her life without Randy and more details about her struggles (and the struggles of those around her) to adjust, this is such a hopeful and insightful book. The writing is beautiful, topics are handled gently but powerfully, and I believe it could give comfort to many people, just to know they're not alone in their struggles.

I received a free copy of this book through the First Reads program.

Kathy says

Being a nurse, I feel a little heartless by giving this book one star, but I did not connect with Jai. I understand loss on both a personal and professional level. I guess it is not my business to critique how Jai handled her devastating loss (but she did write a book). I think she is a self-motivated and strong woman. I admire that strength through the ordeal of watching her husband die. I admire that she took it to the next step and became involved with the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network and tried to make a difference in other people's lives. But throughout the book, I found myself thinking, "Jai, it is not about just you. Your whole family is being devastated with this tragedy." She had a nanny and a babysitter and all kinds of family and friends for support. Jai is the caregiver, but she is also a sister and a mother and a wife. For instance, Valentine's Day 2009, it was six months after Randy's death. Jai was basically upset because Randy would not be sending her flowers. That is totally understandable and my heart broke for her. Her brother secretly came to her home and helped her children make Valentine's cards for her, he had flowers waiting for her. Jai did not see the thoughtfulness and sweetness of the act, instead she saw "sympathy for the widow". I loved "Last Lecture", and I was happy to discover that the Jai has found happiness again, I just wish I understood her approach in healing.

Heather says

I really did not care for this book. Maybe I am missing the point? I read the Last Lecture, and enjoyed that. I found myself thinking, "what you need a Nanny, a baby sitter, and au pair to do the day to day things?" I can see how losing your husband would be such a great stress, but there are women out there that do not have husbands and care and balance their lives with kids. Another part that bothered me, was the fact she left her children to go to Houston for months to be with her husband for his treatment. Now I understand that being with your husband during this difficult time would be a priority. But your babies are just as much a priority. There would be NO way that I would leave my kids for that long! I thought it was selfish on Randy and her part. Why not take the kids with your Nanny?? I was trying not to judge through this whole book, trying to put myself in her shoes, but I just could not get over it. Live and let live...

Marie says

I loved Randy Pausch's The Last Lecture, one of the few books I've actually bought so I can reread whenever I want. I really liked Jai's book, until the last few chapters. What started out as a great book about the struggle caregivers go through as they watch their loved ones die, ended as a "poor me" book. Jai complains about caring for 3 kids & not having any me time, yet has the money for a live in nanny & does not have to work. She decides to go overseas traveling with a girlfriend b/c she feels she "deserves it now" rather than wait until her kids are in college. Jai has had some very hard times in her life that would not be wished on anyone and I think if she would've stopped her book a few chapters earlier it would've been so much more appealing. There are many, many people who can identify with her early on in the book, but so very few have the financial resources & large family support that she draws on, & seems to take a bit for granted.

Crown Publishing Group says

A remarkably frank, deeply moving, and inspiring memoir by Jai Pausch, whose husband, Randy, wrote the bestseller *The Last Lecture* while battling pancreatic cancer.

"Jai is such a giver that she often forgets to take care of herself," Randy Pausch wrote about his wife. "Jai knows that she'll have to give herself permission to make herself a priority."

In *Dream New Dreams*, Jai Pausch shares her own story for the first time: her emotional journey from wife and mother to full-time caregiver, shuttling between her three young children and Randy's bedside as he sought treatment far from home; and then to widow and single parent, fighting to preserve a sense of stability for her family, while coping with her own grief and the challenges of running a household without a partner.

Jai paints a vivid, honest portrait of a vital, challenging relationship between two strong people who faced a grim prognosis and the self-sacrificing decisions it often required. As she faced life without the husband she called her "magic man," Jai learned to make herself a priority to create a new life of hope and happiness—as she puts it, to "feel a spark of my own magic beginning to flicker."

Dream New Dreams is a powerful story of grief, healing, and newfound independence. With advice artfully woven into an intimate, beautifully written narrative, Jai's story will inspire not only the legions of readers who made *The Last Lecture* a bestseller, but also those who are embarking on a journey of loss and renewal themselves.

Marianne K says

I did not like this book. I just could not connect to the author. She came across as a whiny narcissist. Too much info was revealed about her husband that was private and should have remained so. This woman had an incredible amount of support through family, friends, counselors, nannies, babysitters, au pairs, and monetary means and still managed to whine throughout. It was an essay, stretched to a book. Doesn't work.

♥ Ibrahim ♥ says

Yes, Randy was such an iconic man, and he will always be an icon that inspires us and challenges us to be better. But Randy for Jai is just her husband. Is it too much if she is honest and she describes in plain terms how she feels as a wife? Why are people so demanding and want the excitement of the inspiration? People don't like pain. But Jai's life has been a series of pain and she has been giving and giving... By the way, have we ever wondered what she is getting as a wife? Is a woman supposed to sing praises of her husband like everybody else? No, it's okay to be human and let out how we truly feel. Call us negative. Call us whiney. We don't care. But we get to share our side of the story and be honest to how we truly feel.

Megan says

I never imagined when I read *The Last Lecture* several years ago that my husband, whom I had not even met

yet, would also be diagnosed with cancer and lose his battle while we were still newlyweds and brand new parents. (My husband of two years passed away two months ago after a year long battle with leukemia; our son was only 13 months old at the time of his father's passing.) I often thought of The Last Lecture and Randy Pausch during my experience with my husband's cancer, so as soon as I heard of Dream New Dreams, I read it as soon as I could. I highly recommend this book to anyone who has been a caregiver or lost a loved one. I connected with Jai and her experiences and I felt that she articulated so beautifully much of what I have felt through my own journey. She addresses each aspect of her story very honestly and openly -- I felt relieved to read about the struggles she and her husband experienced in their relationship with the stress and fear of cancer weighing over them or about the way she handled childcare or the logistics of cancer treatment. Jai dealt with her grief and loss in a very personal way, certainly in a manner different from mine, but it still spoke to me and gave words to something I'm sure many people have gone through and find difficult to express fully. I loved it and will probably read it again as I continue to encounter new aspects of grieving, widowhood, and single parenthood.

Michelle says

The foreword by the author of this book spoke to me, almost in each sentence...what valuable thoughts she shares and knowledge that I wish I would have had several years ago. Hindsight is always so interesting! Having been in a position of caregiver and support to several who were dying or had lost family members, I didn't realize at the time that the person in the caregiver/support role needs support too. I somehow thought I needed to carry it all in my own two hands so that those I loved who were suffering would not have to suffer so much. . .in other words I didn't realize that I needed to have a support-system for myself during that time. The author, whose husband wrote "The Last Lecture" in his final months of life, shares her insight in her time of being the main caregiver to her husband while balancing three young children. I like how she shares her honest struggles and yet also shares the triumphs. The title of her book, "Dream New Dreams", is fitting. . .she shares that when life throw us a life-changing trial, we can dream new dreams. I have watched this in many friends and loved ones who have experienced loss. . .you change your dream and love what you have been blessed with. Excellent and powerful!

Sara Hassan says

What a true fighter Jai Pausch is. This was a really nice read.
RIP Randy Pausch.

Christina Hodge says

Truth be told, I was more excited about the fact that she wrote the book than the actual book itself...

The nation was taken by storm by the entire concept of "The Last Lecture" series, and the wonderful lessons it taught us about our own life, and respectively, our own immortality...colleges across the nation developed like lectures, and we were all inspired, once again, at the power of words and the realization they can bring...

Fast forward a few years, and we have the opportunity to hear the same story, yet told from the other side of the coin....what a great opportunity for us readers who became truly invested in Randy's journey...in this book. his wife Jai shares with readers her "side of the coin"...we hear with great detail what this experience was like for her, the sacrifices she made, the strength she consistently exhibits, and the heart wrenching decisions she had to consistently make...and while this book was brutally honest, at times I felt it was repetitive, which I believe is because this book was written retrospectively...nevertheless, what an amazing legacy to leave behind to their families, especially their children...first hand experiences on how to overcome one of life's greatest tragedies, and somehow find the strength to go on...

My favorite part of the book, the title "Dream New Dreams"...what a phenomenal life's mantra to live by!

Reham Almutairi ????? ?????? says

What a waste of time ! A pointless book. I could come up with only two reasons behind her writing this book...I want to be famous...I want money! There is nothing wrong with wanting the two...but one deserves them when they actually do -or in this case write- something ! This book adds NOTHING to the reader. I'm a daughter of a cancer fighter and I know exactly what it means to be a caregiver to a cancer patient. Pausch creates from every single incident a dramatic episode! She sounds fed up with her role...she whines and whines in the book like a little baby seeking attention. I couldn't sympathize with her at all. Actually she disgusts me when she complains about everything as if she is the only sufferer in that situation. When she turns her simple eczema to a BIG problem, I was really laughing...what the heck. When she talks about how she approaches the topic of dating to her "little kids" she sounds ridiculous, apart from her oldest kid, her daughter was too young to understand this...and she makes it sound like this kid understands what this means...while a three year old hardly remembers her daddy.

I can't believe how could a person complain this much about caring about a beloved . If I could do it again and care of dad, I would have never hesitated for a second. Yes it was difficult to be a caregiver, but to remember that you relieve a tiny bit of their pain is worth it. I know that she wants to show that the caregiver suffers as much as the patient and we should sympathize with them...but the way she presents her idea is just ugly.

I really hated this book...and it is my number one -for this year-in my HATE-POINTLESS-BOOKS list. She is a drama queen..

Totally not recommended.

Julie says

This was a wonderful book of hope. You might remember the author's husband, Randy Pausch who was a full professor at Carnegie Mellon University. He gave the poignant speech called "The Last Lecture" which he gave as he was dying from cancer. He gave it to his students and a huge audience but it was specifically for his very young children who he knew would grow up without him. Dream New Dreams was written by his widow 4 years after Randy's passing. It was her side of the story - their courtship, marriage, becoming parents of 3, his diagnosis of pancreatic cancer, his treatment, her care giving, the impact on the children, Randy's remission, the reoccurrence of cancer, his death and her life without him as a single parent. She dealt

very openly with her grief, her triumphs, her failures and most of all her healing ... which is on going. Even though the topic was heartbreaking, it was truly a book of hope - a guide for all who have experienced loss in one form or another. It is learning to dream new dreams in each of our lives. I don't give many 5 stars, but Jai Pausch - you get 5 stars for sharing your story and for the good work you continue to the oft forgotten care givers and those left behind. Well done!!

PS She gave a name to a phrase I have used so often since my own bout with cancer ... I call it call "the new normal" ... never had a name for "the new normal" but she hit it on the head ... The New Normal's name is FEAR!!! That's it! It's nice to have someone understand and name "the new normal - fear!"

Elizabeth says

I won this book in a goodreads giveaway. The author claims that she wrote this book to help shed light on the pain and suffering caregivers go through when taking care of others who are ravaged with cancer. I don't think this book does that, I'm not down playing her grief but she had it a lot easier than most people ever would. She didn't have to worry about the financial aspect and even after her husband passed she was set so she didn't have the worries of going back to work and she even had a nanny. I don't know if it was her intention but just seemed like she was bragging about how good she had it in coping with this. I also was upset over her comment about being embarrassed about taking antidepressants, I feel this is sending a negative message to those of us who suffer from depression, like we should feel bad for taking them when all we want is a little relief so we can function normally. Also, I don't understand why she would write about her husband suggesting they give up the baby to lighten her load when she becomes a single mom. What if her daughter reads this some day, very tacky. The author is a fantastic writer I just did not like what she was writing and it doesn't make her come across in a very good light. I'm truly disappointed as I was really looking forward to reading it.

Lisa says

I won this book through a Goodreads giveaway.

After reading other reviews, I feel as if I am in the vast minority. I really didn't care for *Dream New Dreams* by Jai Pausch (widow of Randy Pausch, CMU professor and best-selling author of the Last Lecture). But I'm sure I didn't need to qualify that - obviously you know who Jai Pausch is and that is the reason you are interested in this book. And I think that is an issue.

In life, it seems Randy was a huge life-force, a brilliant and energetic personality. His persona only grew when the YouTube video of his "Last Lecture" went viral and spun into a best-selling book. I can only imagine that Jai needed to find her own voice and define herself outside of Randy's universe.

But *Dream New Dreams* is simply the Randy/Jai story from her perspective, including all the difficult details of being a caregiver for her famous dying husband while also having three young children. For people in similar circumstances, I'm sure Jai's story will resonate and contain understandings that others cannot process. Whereas Randy's story contained universal themes (everyone can obtain their childhood dreams), Jai's seems less so (being a caregiver for a dying loved one is hard, even when one has no financial difficulties and an army of friends, family, and nannies at one's disposal).

One thing I really disliked was Jai's tendency to share too much. She describes a scene at the beginning of Randy's illness, when their youngest child was just a few months old. He suggests putting Chloe up for adoption, in order to assist her in having a better life while also easing the burden on Jai. Jai, of course, refuses. Not only does this scene diminish Randy in the reader's eyes, but what will happen to Chloe when she one day reads it? How on earth does a young girl process that her father thought it was a good idea to put her up for adoption? And that her mother thought the world should know about this?

I really wanted to like this memoir, but while I respect Jai's struggles and triumphs, this book just didn't resonate with me.
