



Hospice Care

Hospice care professionals play a key supportive role for people with dementia and their care partners. This care can be beneficial for people living with dementia at the end of life by promoting comfort, respecting individuality, reducing pain, and promoting peace of mind for the families and care partners.



Ready to implement dementia friendly practices?

Signs a person with dementia may be ready for hospice care:

- Weight loss
- Increased incontinence
- Inability to walk safely
- Increased susceptibility to infections
- Increased issues with eating, drinking and swallowing
- Needs assistance with most or all activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, haircare, oral care, sometimes eating)
- Inability to hold a verbal conversation
- Decreased energy, increased need to sleep/rest
- Less mobility (difficulty sitting up or walking)

Dementia Friendly Communication Skills

- Consider alternative means of communication. Perhaps the verbal communication skills are no longer intact, but a person may be more successful with writing, texting, drawing, or using facial expressions/gestures.
- Talk **directly to** the person with dementia, not **about** the person with dementia (avoid talking past the person, even if you think they can't understand you).
- Approach from the front; avoid moving towards the person too quickly.
- Connect, don't correct. Validate the emotions and experiences of individuals with dementia rather than trying to correct or redirect them. Acknowledge feelings and concerns.
- Apologize and redirect to another environment or subject as needed.
- Speak clearly and calmly, be patient and understanding; listen.
- Use shorter simple sentences. Ask one question at a time.
- Be aware of your body language; smile.
- Seek to understand the person's reality or feelings.
- Respect Individuality. Recognize that each person with dementia is unique and has their own preferences, likes, and dislikes. Each person is an individual; tailor care plans accordingly.

Dementia Friendly Considerations

Offerings:

- Consider offering music or pet therapy. Often, a person with dementia in later stages may not be able to talk, but perhaps they can still sing a familiar song or recite a special prayer.
- Reminisce therapy (photos, music, etc) can be helpful, but avoid asking, “do you remember?”
- Consider specific wishes. Some individuals hope to remain in the home as long as possible, while others may be worried about becoming a burden on family care partners.
- Provide options, but limit to a few options at a time. Too many choices can be overwhelming.
- Develop individualized care plans that consider each person's unique preferences, routines, and life history.

Environment Tips:

- Reduce background noise (turn off TV or radio, close door, avoid background chatter) to help the person focus on a specific conversation or task.
- Create visual cues such as signs, labels, or pictures to help individuals with dementia navigate their environment more easily and independently. Visual cues can also aid in communication.
- Indoor environments should be safe and accessible: well-lit hallways, uncluttered spaces, and prominent, easy-to-understand signs for restrooms and other important places.

Support Care Partners & Families

- Consider that even if the client does not have dementia, the primary care partner or spouse may have dementia. Work to accommodate their needs as well in terms of support/grieving.
- Provide dementia education & communication tips for families.
- Support employees who are family care partners of people living with dementia.

Additional Resources

1. **How to know when a person with dementia is nearing the end of their life (Alzheimer’s Society)**
<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/help-dementia-care/recognising-when-someone-reaching-end-their-life>
2. **AARP, Understanding the Impact of Family Caregiving on Work**
http://www.aarp.org/content/dam/aarp/research/public_policy_institute/ltc/2012/understanding-impact-family-caregiving-work-AARP-ppi-ltc.pdf
3. **Alzheimer’s Association, Know the 10 Signs**
<http://www.alz.org/10-signs-symptoms-alzheimers-dementia.asp>
4. **AARP – How Employers Can Support Working Caregivers**
<https://www.aarp.org/caregiving/life-balance/info-2017/ways-to-support-working-caregivers-lh.html>
5. **Alzheimer’s Society – Communicating**
<https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/info/20064/symptoms/90/communicating-and-language>
6. **Dementia Friendly Iowa**
<https://dementiafriendlyiowa.org/>
7. **Wisconsin Department of Health Services, Dementia Friendly Employers Toolkit**
<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/dementia/employers.htm>
8. **National Hospice & Palliative Care Organization**
<https://www.caringinfo.org/>

Dementia Friendly America
<https://dfamerica.org/>
Dementia Friendly @ Work
<http://www.dfamerica.org/business-training/>

Hospice is just one important part of the community. By working in tandem with other sectors, you can help make the entire community more dementia friendly. Learn more about the process and help your community and others become more dementia friendly at www.dfamerica.org.



Adapted from ACT on Alzheimer's® developed tools and resources.