

# Caring for Someone with Dementia - A Guide for Attenders

## On behalf of the Family

*This document will help you understand the person you are caring for. Please read it carefully. If you have any questions, ask the family.*

### 1. What is Dementia?

Dementia is a brain illness. It is not a normal part of getting old — it is a medical condition. It slowly affects a person's memory, thinking and behaviour. It also makes everyday tasks more difficult over time.

There is no cure. But with good care, the person can feel safe, comfortable and happy.

#### **The most important thing to remember:**

The person is NOT being difficult on purpose. Their brain is not working the way it used to. What looks like stubbornness is usually confusion or fear. Always be patient.

### 2. What You May See

#### **Memory**

- They may ask the same question many times — even after you just answered it. This is normal. Answer calmly each time.
- They may remember things from many years ago, but forget what happened this morning.
- They may not recognise family members or people they have known for years.

#### **Behaviour**

- They may feel anxious or upset for no clear reason.
- They may insist on going somewhere — like an old workplace or a relative's home.
- They may think someone has taken something from them, even if nothing is missing.
- They may see or hear things that are not there.

#### **Daily Tasks**

- They may struggle with simple things — dressing, bathing, eating, using a tap or a door.
- They may forget whether they have eaten or taken their medicine.
- They may not recognise familiar objects — like a mobile phone or a spoon.

#### **Communication**

- They may struggle to find the right words.
- They may not always respond to their name.
- They may say one thing but mean something else.

### 3. How to Speak with Them

#### Do these things:

- Speak slowly, clearly and calmly.
- Use short, simple sentences.
- Ask only one question at a time. Give them time to answer.
- Use their name when you speak to them.
- Smile. Your face and tone matter as much as your words.
- Give simple choices: "Would you like tea or water?" — not "What do you want?"
- If they are upset, speak very softly. Stay calm. Do not react with anger.

#### Do not do these things:

- Do not argue with them or try to prove them wrong.
- Do not raise your voice or show frustration.
- Do not ask them to remember something or identify someone — this creates stress.
- Do not give long or complicated instructions.
- Do not talk about them as if they are not in the room.

#### A simple rule:

If they say something that is not correct — ask yourself: will correcting them help, or will it upset them? Most of the time, it is better to gently agree and move forward. Their comfort matters more than being correct.

### 4. Daily Care

#### Routine is very important.

People with Dementia feel calmer when each day follows the same pattern. Try to keep mealtimes, bathing, walking and sleeping at the same time every day. Ask the family what the usual routine is — and follow it.

#### Food and meals

- They may forget they have already eaten. Do not argue. Gently redirect them.
- Serve food in a bowl with a spoon — this is easier than a plate with many items.
- Make sure they eat and drink regularly. They may not ask for water on their own.

#### Bathing and personal care

- Be patient. Do not rush.
- Tell them what you are going to do before you do it: "I am going to help you wash your hands now."
- Always be gentle and respectful. Protect their dignity.
- If they refuse, do not force them. Wait a little while and try again.

## **Sleep**

- They may not sleep well at night. This is common with Dementia.
- Encourage light activity during the day — even a short walk — to help them sleep better.
- Keep evenings calm and quiet.

## **Medicines**

- Give medicines exactly as the family tells you. Do not change anything on your own.
- Never leave medicines where the person can reach them without supervision.
- Tell the family immediately if a dose is missed or if anything unusual happens.

## **5. Safety — What to Watch For**

Keeping them safe is your most important responsibility.

### **In the home**

- Never leave them alone unless the family has told you it is safe to do so.
- Make sure the main door is locked. They may try to leave the house without realising it.
- Keep sharp objects, medicines and valuables out of their reach.
- Make sure the home is well lit, especially at night.

### **If they try to leave**

- Do not stop them by force unless there is immediate danger.
- Speak calmly. Distract them gently. Guide them back with a simple reason they can accept.
- Remember: they believe they are going somewhere real and important. Do not dismiss it.

### **Falls**

- Watch them carefully in the bathroom and at night — these are the highest-risk times.
- Support them when they need it. But let them do what they can on their own.

### **In an emergency**

- Contact the family immediately.
- Stay calm in front of the person. Your calmness helps them stay calm too.

## **6. Building Trust with Them**

When you arrive as a new attender, they see a stranger. They do not know who you are or why you are there. This can make them anxious, suspicious or uncooperative.

Your first job is not just to care for them. It is to build trust.

### How to build trust:

- Be warm, gentle and consistent — in every interaction, every day.
- When you begin a task, tell them softly: "I am here to help you."
- Do not take their reactions personally. It is the illness — not a judgment of you.
- Find small things they respond to well — a song they like, a topic they enjoy — and use these to create comfortable moments.
- Be patient. Trust takes a few days to build — but once it is there, your work will become much easier.

Once they are comfortable with you, they will be calmer, more cooperative and easier to care for. The time you invest in building that relationship is never wasted.

## 7. Looking After Yourself

This work is demanding. It takes patience, physical energy and emotional strength — every day.

- It is normal to feel frustrated sometimes. What matters is how you behave in that moment.
- If something is difficult, please speak to the family. Do not handle it alone.
- Rest when you can.
- You cannot take good care of someone else if you are exhausted.

The family is here to support you. You are an important part of this team.

## 8. Quick Reference — Do's and Don'ts

### DO

Speak slowly and calmly

Follow the daily routine

Offer simple choices

Be patient if they resist

Keep them safe at all times

Tell the family about any change

Be warm and build trust

Give medicines exactly as instructed

### DO NOT

Argue or raise your voice

Change routines without telling the family

Ask open or complicated questions

Force or rush them

Leave them alone without permission

Handle problems or emergencies alone

Take their reactions personally

Change or skip medicines on your own

## A Note from the Family

*Dear Attender,*

*The person in your care lived a full and meaningful life. They deserve to be treated with kindness, patience and respect – every single day.*

*Your role matters greatly – not just for their physical safety, but for how they feel each day.*

*Even when they cannot always show it – they can feel kindness. They can feel patience. They can feel care.*

*Thank you for being part of this journey with us!*

*Family contact name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_*

Further reading: *One Day at a Time – Caring for a Parent with Dementia* [www.rohitrchowdhry.com/dementia](http://www.rohitrchowdhry.com/dementia)