



Support for this initiative has been provided by
The Dementia Engagement, Education, and Research (DEER) Program at the University of Nevada, Reno

Information Session Workbook

The DEER Program is the Administrator for Dementia Friends Nevada

Welcome to Dementia Friends!

- People living with dementia need to be understood and supported in their communities.
- You can help by becoming a Dementia Friend in your community.
- Visit www.dementiafriendsusa.org to learn more!

Dementia: What You Should Know

Dementia is not a specific disease. It's an overall term that describes a wide range of symptoms associated with a decline in memory or other thinking skills severe enough to reduce a person's ability to perform everyday activities.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common type of dementia and accounts for 60 to 80 percent of cases. Other types of dementia include Lewy body, frontotemporal, vascular, and mixed dementias. Mixed dementia means living with more than one type of dementia at the same time.

Certain types of traumatic brain injury may increase the risk of developing Alzheimer's or another type of dementia years after the injury takes place. Other risk factors include high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, and hearing loss.

Common Types of Dementia



Can We Reduce the Risk of Dementia?

Yes! Although we cannot eliminate the risk of dementia, living a healthy lifestyle may reduce the risk factors associated with certain types of dementia. For example, reducing our cholesterol intake, maintaining a normal blood pressure, and staying at a healthy weight all contribute towards a healthier lifestyle and a lower risk of dementia.

≈ 1 in 9 people 65+ in the U.S. will develop dementia
≈ 1 in 2 people 85+ will develop dementia
≈ 1 in 9 adults 18+ in the U.S. will report memory problems getting worse

Some risk reduction strategies include:

avoiding or stopping smoking, following a Mediterranean diet (whole grains, vegetables, fruits, fish, nuts, beans, olive oils, and reduced red meats), engaging in at least 30 minutes of exercise per day, interacting with puzzles and other mentally stimulating activities, and staying socially active.

It is important to note that even though we can reduce our risk for developing dementia, and we can help treat and manage the symptoms related to dementia, we cannot cure or reverse most types of dementia.

Some activities that promote resilience, re-build connections to our communities, and reduce risk for dementia include:

- **Health Promotion:** Maintaining overall healthy living practices by paying attention to our personal actions, the actions taken by people around us, and the physical spaces in which we live.
- **Cultural Practices:** Participating in our family and cultural traditions that support creativity, art, music, physical activity, and togetherness.
- **Social and Emotional Well-being:** Engaging in activities that promote a sense of belonging to one's community and help maintain meaningful connections with others.

In addition to reducing risk, these same strategies can help people living with dementia to live well, and we can each play a role in helping them stay connected to their communities. Hope doesn't end with a dementia diagnosis.

Bookcase Story

Imagine a 70-year-old woman who has dementia. Now imagine there is a full bookcase beside her. Each book inside the bookcase represents one of her skills or memories.

On the top shelves are her memories of facts and her skill for thinking in complex or complicated ways. For people with dementia, the top or outer part of the brain is damaged first. Skills like math, using language, and keeping one's behavior in check are found here. In our bookcase story, these skills are also books on the top shelves.

When dementia rocks the woman's bookcase, the books on the top shelf begin to fall out. The woman may not remember what she ate for breakfast, that she has to pay for items at the drugstore, or that someone came to visit this morning.

Emotions and feelings are lower down on the bookcase just like they are in the lower or inner part of the brain. This is the instinct area of the brain.

Feelings like love, happiness, frustration, and sensing respect reside here. As dementia continues to rock her bookcase, the books on these lower shelves stay for a much longer time.

The bookcase story helps explain different thinking skills and memories and the effects of dementia. Facts and complex thinking will fall away first, while emotions and feelings will remain.



Early Signs of Dementia vs. Typical Aging

Many of us slow down as we get older, both in body and mind; however, big changes with memory, thinking, communication, or solving problems that make it hard to get through the day **don't happen to everyone**. These changes could be signs of dementia. With most types of dementia, these changes happen slowly.

Common Elements of Aging	10 Early Signs and Symptoms
Sometimes forgetting names or appointments but remembering them later	Memory loss that disrupts daily life
Making occasional errors when balancing a checkbook	Challenges in planning or solving problems
Needing occasional help to use a microwave or check email	Difficulty with familiar tasks at home or at work
Forgetting the day of the week but being able to recall it later	Confusion with time or place
Vision changes related to cataracts	Trouble understanding visual information
Sometimes having trouble finding the right word	Confusion with understanding and communicating thoughts verbally
Losing things from time to time, but retracing steps to find them	Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps to find them
Making a bad decision once in a while	Experiencing more slips in judgment or acting impulsively
Sometimes feeling weary of work, family, and social obligations	Withdrawing from work or social activities
Developing specific ways of doing things and preferring routines	Changes in mood and personality

Sources: www.alz.org/10-signs-symptoms-alzheimers-dementia.asp and University of Wyoming *10 Early Signs of Abnormal Memory Changes* created in collaboration with Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho tribal members.

Broken Sentences Worksheet and Six Key Messages

Match the phrases in Column 1 to the phrases in Column 2 by drawing a line from each sentence *beginning* to the corresponding sentence *ending*. You should end up with **six sentences** that make sense and become Dementia Friends' "Six Key Messages about Dementia."

Column 1	Column 2
1. Dementia is caused by...	A. ...more common as people get older, but it is not a normal part of healthy aging.
2. There are things you can do to...	B. ...diseases of or injuries to the brain.
3. Dementia becomes...	C. ...live well, especially with their community's support.
4. Dementia is not...	D. ...reduce the risk of developing dementia.
5. People living with dementia can...	E. ...just about having memory problems.
6. A person living with dementia is...	F. ...a full being—worthy of respect—and is a vital part of their community.

Everyday Tasks

Write a step-by-step list to complete a task you do every day or a lot.
Make sure that someone reading your list could follow
the instructions successfully to complete the task.

People living with dementia sometimes need assistance to complete daily tasks. Some people might benefit from simple reminders, while others might require verbal and/or physical cueing or assistance. It's important to provide the right amount of support to maximize the abilities a person still has. In this activity, we broke down a common task into a series of steps. To help support a person living with dementia, cueing or assistance might be necessary at any or all steps. It's important to provide the missing information or necessary assistance one step at a time. It is also important not to take-over steps of the task the person can do for themselves without assistance.

How to Communicate with People Living with Dementia

Consider the following tips when communicating with a person living with dementia.

Treat the person with dignity and respect. Avoid talking past the person as if they aren't there.

Be aware of your own feelings. Your tone of voice and body language communicate your attitude.

Be patient and supportive. Let the person know that you are listening and trying to understand. If the task or topic is too overwhelming at the moment, you can stop and go back to it later.

Offer comfort and reassurance. If the person is having trouble communicating, let them know that it's okay and encourage the person to continue.

Avoid criticizing or correcting. Don't tell the person what they said was incorrect. Instead, listen and try to find the meaning in what is being said.

Avoid arguing. If the person says something you don't agree with, let it be. Arguing usually only makes things worse and often increases agitation for the person living with dementia.

Offer a guess. If the person uses the wrong word or cannot find a word, you can try guessing the right word. But again, first be patient, offer reassurance, and give them a chance to think. Sometimes, if you understand what the person means, finding the right word may not be necessary.

Encourage nonverbal communication. If you don't understand what is being said, ask the person to point or gesture.

When approaching the person living with dementia and starting a conversation:

- Keep in mind some people living with dementia have trouble seeing or hearing. Come from the front, identify yourself, and keep good eye contact if that is something that is considered respectful and comfortable in your culture.
- If the person isn't standing, go down to eye level so they can see your face.
- Call the person by their preferred name.
- Use short, simple phrases and repeat information as needed. Ask one question at a time.
- Speak slowly and clearly, using a gentle and relaxed tone.
- Patiently wait for a response while the person takes time to process what you said.
- Help them know that they are still important, respected, and in control of their own lives.

During the conversation:

- Provide choices so they feel they still have power, but make them simple. For example, say "Do you want chocolate or vanilla ice cream," instead of asking "What kind of ice cream do you want?" Sometimes, too many choices can feel overwhelming.
- Provide a statement rather than ask a question. For example, say "I hope you had a wonderful day today!" instead of asking "What did you do today?" This opens a space for the person to provide information without putting them on the spot to recall specific details or facts.
- Avoid confusing and vague statements. Instead, speak directly; rather than saying "They're here for you." say "The taxi you asked me to arrange is here to take you home."

- Turn negatives into positives. Instead of saying, “Don't go there,” suggest, “Let's go here.” Instead of saying “You can't do that,” encourage “Let's try this.”
- Give visual cues. Point or touch the item you want the person to use or begin the task for them yourself.
- Avoid quizzing the person with questions like “Do you remember when...?” or “Do you remember who this person is?”
- Try using written notes or pictures as reminders if the person is able to understand them.

Six Key Messages

- Dementia is caused by diseases of or injuries to the brain.
- There are things you can do to reduce the risk of developing dementia.
- Dementia becomes more common as people get older, but is not a normal part of healthy aging.
- Dementia is not just about having memory problems.
- People living with dementia can live well, especially with their community's support.
- A person living with dementia is a full being—worthy of respect—and is a vital part of their community.

Turn Your Understanding into Action

People living with dementia are valuable individuals who make meaningful contributions to society as a whole. They can serve as wise leaders, advocates, and storytellers who can continue to be active members of our communities.

As a Dementia Friend for people living with dementia in my community, I will...

- _____ Focus on what people living with dementia CAN do throughout the progression of dementia, such as sharing stories and experiences, teaching valuable lessons, or sharing their wisdom with younger generations.
- _____ Include people who are living with dementia in the decisions affecting them; everyone has a right to express their voice and choice.
- _____ Get in touch and stay in touch with someone I know who is living with dementia.
- _____ Have empathy and be patient.
- _____ Be more understanding.
- _____ Use language and words that value people living with dementia.
- _____ Help someone living with dementia protect themselves from being exploited, abused, or ridiculed by others in the community.
- _____ Carry out this personal action (write your own action):

Resources in Your Community

Alzheimer's Association 24/7 Helpline: Serves people with memory loss, caregivers, health care professionals, general public, diverse populations, and concerned friends and family. Helpline provides referrals to local community programs and services, dementia-related education, crisis assistance, and emotional support. (800) 272-3900 or www.alz.org

Lewy Body Dementia Association: A nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness of the Lewy body dementias (LBD), supporting people with LBD, their families and caregivers, and promoting scientific advances. The Association's purposes are charitable, educational, and scientific. (800) 539-9767 or www.lbda.org

Dementia Action Alliance (DAA): Provides hope and help to individuals and families living with dementia, as well as information about how to live proactively with dementia. DAA offers services and peer supports including three weekly online discussion groups, two monthly podcasts, an online Resources Center, a national Speakers Bureau, and other services. All DAA efforts and activities are shaped and informed by individuals living with dementia. (732) 212-9036 or www.daanow.org

Dementia Friendly America (DFA): DFA is a national network of communities, organizations, and individuals seeking to ensure that communities across the U.S. are equipped to support people living with dementia and their caregivers. Dementia friendly communities foster the abilities of people living with dementia to remain in community and engage and thrive in day to day living. To learn how to join the DFA network of communities, or to connect with your local community, visit www.dfamerica.org

Healthy Body, Healthier Brain: Includes resources and information for people living with memory problems and other chronic health problems like high blood pressure, diabetes, or kidney disease, as well as tips to reduce the risk for developing dementia. <https://www.cdc.gov/aging/publications/features/healthy-body-brain.html>

Eldercare Locator: Is a public service of the U.S. Administration on Aging connecting you to local services, supports, and information for older adults and their families on issues related to caregiving, health, housing, transportation, and more. Reach them at 1-800-677-1116 or <https://eldercare.acl.gov>

Local senior center

Local dementia support group

Local dementia-friendly community group or effort