



In a dementia-friendly community, people use language that is respectful and inclusive of people who live with dementia and their care partners. By using dementia-friendly language, you can help reduce the stigma.

When speaking about people living with dementia and their experiences...

...remember that people living with dementia are people foremost. It's important to use language that focuses on the person's abilities because the person is much more than their diagnosis. Language that focuses on losses and makes assumptions about ability reinforces myths and stigma and can create barriers to inclusion.

Dementia-friendly language:

- ✓ A person living with dementia
- ✓ Challenging, life changing, stressful
- ✓ Changes in behaviour (speak to how behaviour has changed)
- ✓ Reactive behaviour
- ✓ Responsive behaviour
- ✓ Respectful terms that acknowledge the person is an adult (e.g., "clothing protector" or "smock")

Language to avoid:

- ✗ Sufferer, demented person, victim, patient
- ✗ Devastating, hopeless, tragic
- ✗ [A person is] being difficult
- ✗ Aggressive
Referring to behaviour resulting from frustrations as "reactive" or "responsive" rather than "aggressive" shows that you understand the reality of the person living with dementia
- ✗ Terms that are typically associated with children and inadvertently infantilize people living with dementia (e.g., "bib")
- ✗ "Elder speak" / patronizing language such as "sweetie" or "dear"

When speaking about a care partner, family member or friend of a person living with dementia...

...remember that everyone has a different experience and try to use language that is emotionally neutral. When possible, ask people what they prefer to be called (i.e., some may prefer “care partner” while others may prefer “caregiver” or “supporter”) and avoid assumptions about the nature of the relationship or the care provided.

Dementia-friendly language:

- ✓ Caregiver, care partner, supporter
- ✓ Family member, friend of, support network, mother, daughter, etc.
- ✓ Impact of supporting

Language to avoid:

- ✗ Informal caregiver, professional caregiver
- ✗ Loved one(s)
(In some cases, people will be caring for a person with whom they had a challenging relationship – the person might not necessarily be a “loved one” to them.)
- ✗ Burden of caring

When speaking about dementia...

...“living with dementia” is a suitable general term to use. But remember that dementia is not a specific disease. It’s an umbrella term for a set of symptoms that are caused by disorders affecting the brain. If the person has shared their diagnosis and you need to be specific, it’s important that the language you use is accurate and easily understood.

Dementia-friendly language:

- ✓ Alzheimer’s disease; Alzheimer’s disease and/or other dementias
- ✓ Younger onset dementia

Language to avoid:

- ✗ AD (acronyms can be challenging), Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias (not all dementia are related)
- ✗ Early onset dementia
(While still correct, this term may imply the stage of disease trajectory rather than the age of onset)