

Dementia Friendly Language Guide



PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA
COMMUNITY
RESPECT
BELONGING
CARE PARTNERS

This guide contains suggestions for ways to refer to people living with dementia and topics about dementia to ensure respectful, non-stigmatizing, and empowering language. These suggestions focus on putting the person first in conversation.



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PLEASE USE

- Refer to someone living with dementia by their name or as a person 'living with dementia' - a person is not defined by their diagnosis

- Dementia
- A person living with dementia
- Care partner and/or family

- Describe the symptoms of dementia (e.g., change in mood or behaviour, memory loss, difficulty finding words)
- Describe the impact it is having (e.g., difficulty communicating, difficulty navigating)

- Refer to dementia as a condition
- Young Onset Dementia (YOD)

When describing the impacts of dementia:

- Challenging, life-changing
- Stressful
- Complex
- Requiring or needing support

PLEASE AVOID

- Defining the person by their disease/placing the condition before the person (e.g. the 'patient' or the 'sufferer')

- Dementing or demented
- Affliction
- Suffering or sufferer
- Victim/victims
- Caregiver/Loved one(s)
- Patient (when used outside of the medical context)

- Someone who has lost their mind
- Slang expressions that are derogatory (e.g., "a couple cents short", "not all there", "losing his/her marbles")
- "Old-timer's disease"

- Referring to dementia as an illness/disease (unless speaking about a type of dementia such as Alzheimer's disease)
- Early onset dementia

- Hopeless
- Unbearable, impossible
- Tragic, devastating
- Painful
- Burden