October 14, 2026

Elevate your impact on Nova Scotians affected by Dementia

Dementia Friendly Communities

"Community Changes Everything"



Société Alzheimer Society

NOVA SCOTIA



We are all Treaty People.

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I.D.E.A. at ASNS

Inclusion, **D**iversity, **E**quity, **A**ccessibility

HAAC

Health Association of African Canadians

Our Health is our Wealth

isans | Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia

réseau santé NOUVELLE-ÉCOSSE

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Disclaimer

If you are viewing a recorded session, please note:

- All information is the property of the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia
- Take note of the date of the session on the title slide.
- Information about dementia and our programs is updated regularly. If possible, we suggest viewing educational content recorded within the past year.
- For the most up to date information connect with our InfoLine at 1-800 611 6345 or alzheimer@asns.ca

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Overview

What is dementia?

Dementia friendly communities are….

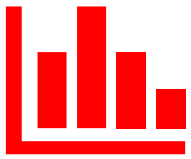
Dementia friendly interactions

Dementia friendly spaces

What can you do?

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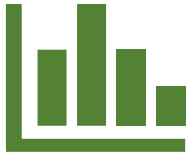
Why learn about dementia?



18,800 Nova Scotians are currently living with a diagnosis of dementia.



28,649 Nova Scotians predicted to be living with dementia by 2050.



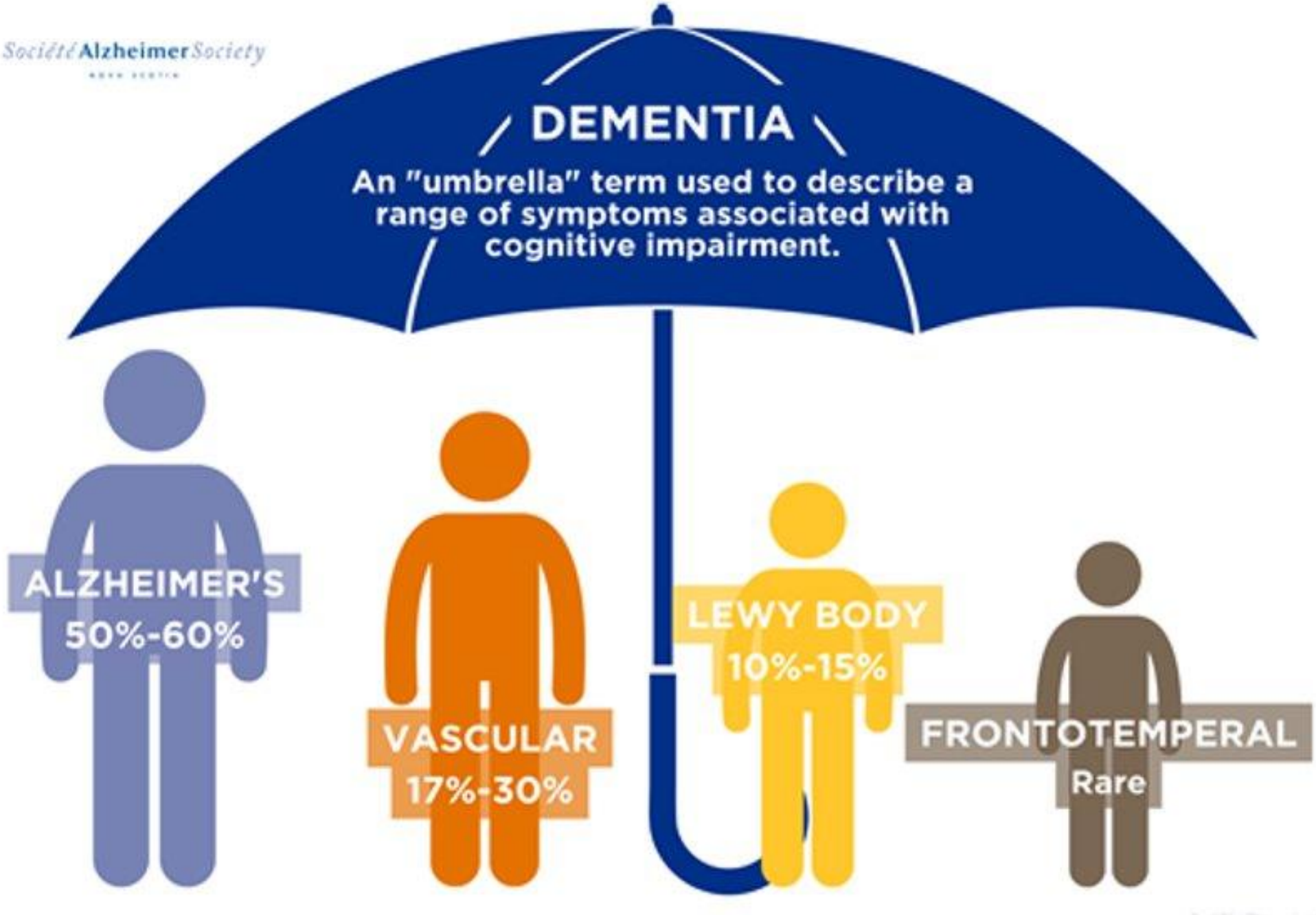
46% of Canadians admit they would feel ashamed or embarrassed if they had dementia.

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What is dementia?

- A term for a set of symptoms that are caused by disorders that affect the brain
- It's progressive - symptoms gradually get worse
- There is no cure…*yet!*

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What are the symptoms?

- Impairment of memory
- Changes in judgment and reasoning
- Changes in mood & behaviour
- Changes in communication abilities



Possible Signs of Dementia

Memory changes that affect day-to-day abilities

Forgetting who a family member is or not remembering new information.



Difficulty doing familiar tasks

Forgetting how to do something you've been doing your whole life, such as preparing a meal or getting dressed.





Changes in language and communication

Forgetting words, substituting words or using the wrong words that don't fit the conversation.

Possible Signs of Dementia

Disorientation in time and place

Not knowing what day of the week it is or getting lost in a familiar place.



Impaired judgment

Not recognizing a medical problem that needs attention or wearing light clothing on a cold day.



Problems with abstract thinking

Having difficulty managing finances or not knowing what numbers are and how they are used.



Possible Signs of Dementia

Misplacing things

Putting things in strange places, like a remote in the refrigerator.





Changes in mood, behaviour and personality

Experiencing severe mood changes or behaving out of character, such as being suspicious or withdrawing.



Loss of initiative

Losing interest in spending time with friends and family and in taking part in activities. Needing prompts to become involved.



Changes in sight or motion

Not seeing objects when walking or difficulty placing items on a table.



What did you notice about the person's ability to use services such as public transportation, the ATM, grocery shopping?

What reactions from others did the person encounter?

How would you feel if people responded to you that way?

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A Dementia Friendly Community supports, respects and includes people living with dementia and their partners in care in the places they live, work and play.

It's a community that values contribution, opportunity and choice.

It’s YOUR community!

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What makes a community dementia friendly?

Dementia friendly interactions:

Social considerations - ways you can communicate effectively with someone living with dementia

Dementia friendly spaces:

Physical considerations - optimizing your space to be more dementia friendly.

Dementia friendly organizations:

Organizational considerations - adapting policies, practices and services to be more inclusive of people living with dementia.

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Dementia friendly interactions

1. Enhance communication

2. Offer appropriate help

3. Support the person's reality

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Enhance communication



- Reduce distractions
- Make eye contact
- Use short, simple sentences
- Allow person time to respond
- Speak slowly and clearly using a comforting tone of voice

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Offer appropriate help

- Approach in an open, friendly manner from the front
- Ask if and how you can help
- Avoid making assumptions
- Offer simple choices
- Provide clear instructions



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Support the person's reality



- Recognize how the person might be perceiving the situation
- Offer reassurance
- Connect, don't correct
- Observe the person's actions and body language

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Disorientation and getting lost

- 3 out of 5 people living with dementia will go missing at some point in the disease.
- A person can go missing at any time and often much earlier in the disease course than one might expect.
- 50% of people not found within 24 hours experience serious injury or even death.
- If you suspect the person is missing, call 9-1-1 right away.

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Dementia Friendly Spaces

- Signage and Wayfinding
- Entrances & Lighting
- Flooring
- Seating
- Waiting areas
- Washrooms
- Background noise
- Surfaces

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More Dementia Friendly Tips

- Using dementia friendly written guidelines
- "Try out" sessions
- Layout and design
- "Safe Spaces"
- Clear directional signage
- Ask someone living with dementia

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Dementia Friendly Communities

- Learn about dementia
- Raise awareness
- Involve people living with dementia
- Start a Memory Café!





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What is one thing you will take away, and use, from today’s session?

What's next?

Understanding Dementia Presentation

Building Dementia Friendly Communities: Online Course

More Dementia Friendly Community Education

Ongoing Tailored Consultations and Support



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Building Dementia-Friendly Communities:

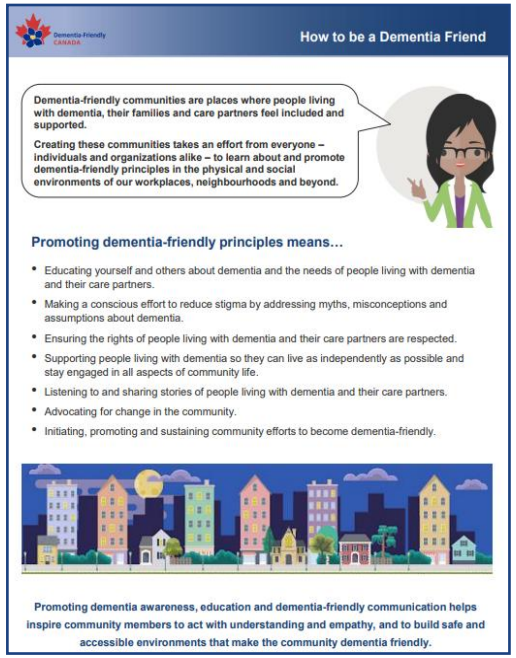
Online Education for Recreation Facilities

The course will provide a foundational knowledge of dementia, and outline the considerations that organizations can include in their social and physical environments in order to better support and include people living with dementia.

Register for this course on ALZeducate:
www.alzeducate.ca/course/view.php?id=10
or scan the QR code.

Questions about becoming Dementia Friendly?
Contact the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia at
dfc@asns.ca or 1-800-611-6345

Tip sheets



How to be a Dementia Friend

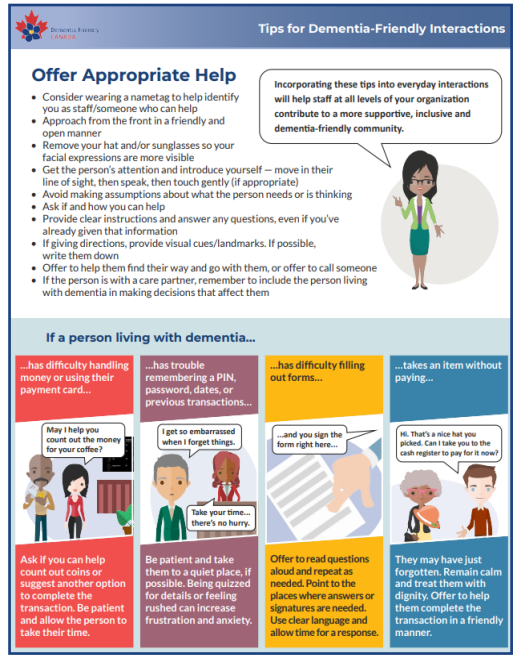
Dementia-friendly communities are places where people living with dementia, their families and care partners feel included and supported.

Creating these communities takes an effort from everyone – individuals and organizations alike – to learn about and promote dementia-friendly principles in the physical and social environments of our workplaces, neighbourhoods and beyond.

Promoting dementia-friendly principles means…

- Educating yourself and others about dementia and the needs of people living with dementia and their care partners.
- Making a conscious effort to reduce stigma by addressing myths, misconceptions and assumptions about dementia.
- Ensuring the rights of people living with dementia and their care partners are respected.
- Supporting people living with dementia so they can live as independently as possible and stay engaged in all aspects of community life.
- Listening to and sharing stories of people living with dementia and their care partners.
- Advocating for change in the community.
- Initiating, promoting and sustaining community efforts to become dementia-friendly.

Promoting dementia awareness, education and dementia-friendly communication helps inspire community members to act with understanding and empathy, and to build safe and accessible environments that make the community dementia friendly.



Tips for Dementia-Friendly Interactions

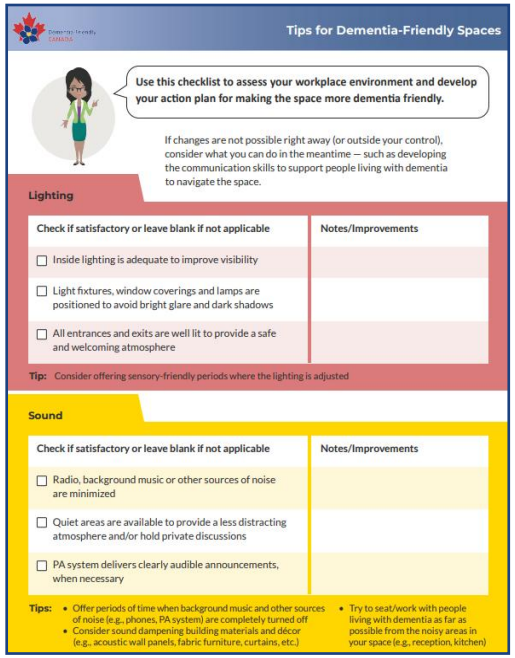
Offer Appropriate Help

- Consider wearing a nametag to help identify you as staff/someone who can help
- Approach from the front in a friendly and open manner
- Remove your hat and/or sunglasses so your facial expressions are more visible
- Get the person's attention and introduce yourself — move in their line of sight, then speak, then touch gently (if appropriate)
- Avoid making assumptions about what the person needs or is thinking
- Ask if and how you can help
- Provide clear instructions and answer any questions, even if you've already given that information
- If giving directions, provide visual cues/landmarks. If possible, write them down
- Offer to help them find their way and go with them, or offer to call someone
- If the person is with a care partner, remember to include the person living with dementia in making decisions that affect them

Incorporating these tips into everyday interactions will help staff at all levels of your organization contribute to a more supportive, inclusive and dementia-friendly community.

If a person living with dementia...

...has difficulty handling money or using their payment card...	...has trouble remembering a PIN, password, dates, or previous transactions...	...has difficulty filling out forms...	...takes an item without paying...
Ask if you can help count out coins or suggest another option to complete the transaction. Be patient and allow the person to take their time.	Be patient and take them to a quiet place, if possible. Being quizzed for details or feeling rushed can increase frustration and anxiety.	Offer to read questions aloud and repeat as needed. Point to the places where answers or signatures are needed. Use clear language and allow time for a response.	They may have just forgotten. Remain calm and treat them with dignity. Offer to help them complete the transaction in a friendly manner.



Tips for Dementia-Friendly Spaces

Use this checklist to assess your workplace environment and develop your action plan for making the space more dementia friendly.

If changes are not possible right away (or outside your control), consider what you can do in the meantime — such as developing the communication skills to support people living with dementia to navigate the space.

Lighting

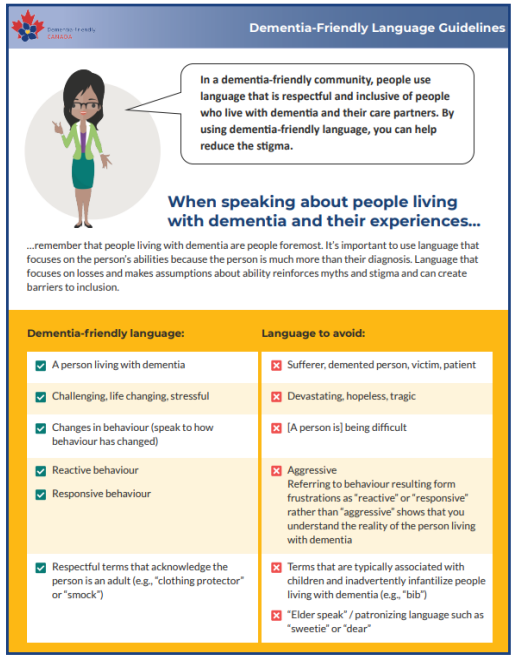
Check if satisfactory or leave blank if not applicable	Notes/Improvements
☐ Inside lighting is adequate to improve visibility	
☐ Light fixtures, window coverings and lamps are positioned to avoid bright glare and dark shadows	
☐ All entrances and exits are well lit to provide a safe and welcoming atmosphere	

Tip: Consider offering sensory-friendly periods where the lighting is adjusted

Sound

Check if satisfactory or leave blank if not applicable	Notes/Improvements
☐ Radio, background music or other sources of noise are minimized	
☐ Quiet areas are available to provide a less distracting atmosphere and/or hold private discussions	
☐ PA system delivers clearly audible announcements, when necessary	

Tips:
- Offer periods of time when background music and other sources of noise (e.g., phones, PA system) are completely turned off
- Consider sound dampening building materials and décor (e.g., acoustic wall panels, fabric furniture, curtains, etc.)
- Try to seat/work with people living with dementia as far as possible from the noisy areas in your space (e.g., reception, kitchen)



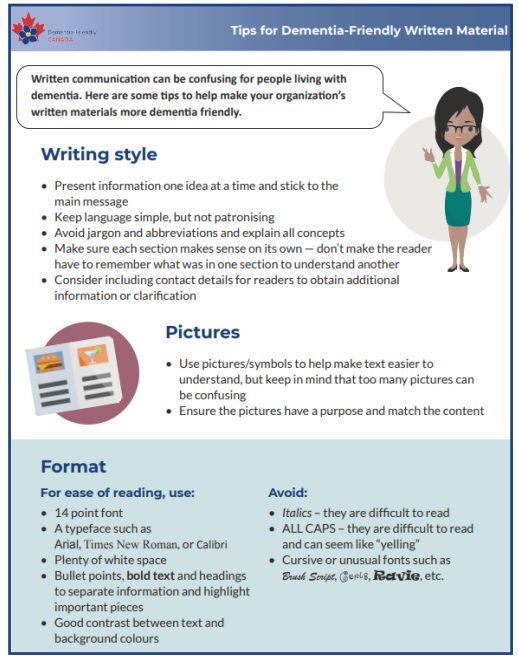
Dementia-Friendly Language Guidelines

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:	Language to avoid:
☑ A person living with dementia	☒ Sufferer, demented person, victim, patient
☑ Challenging, life changing, stressful	☒ Devastating, hopeless, tragic
☑ Changes in behaviour (speak to how behaviour has changed)	☒ [A person is] being difficult
☑ Reactive behaviour ☑ Responsive behaviour	☒ Aggressive Referring to behaviour resulting form frustrations as "reactive" or "responsive" rather than "aggressive" shows that you understand the reality of the person living with dementia
☑ Respectful terms that acknowledge the person is an adult (e.g., "clothing protector" or "smock")	☒ 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"



Tips for Dementia-Friendly Written Material

Written communication can be confusing for people living with dementia. Here are some tips to help make your organization's written materials more dementia friendly.

Writing style

- Present information one idea at a time and stick to the main message
- Keep language simple, but not patronising
- Avoid jargon and abbreviations and explain all concepts
- Make sure each section makes sense on its own — don't make the reader have to remember what was in one section to understand another
- Consider including contact details for readers to obtain additional information or clarification

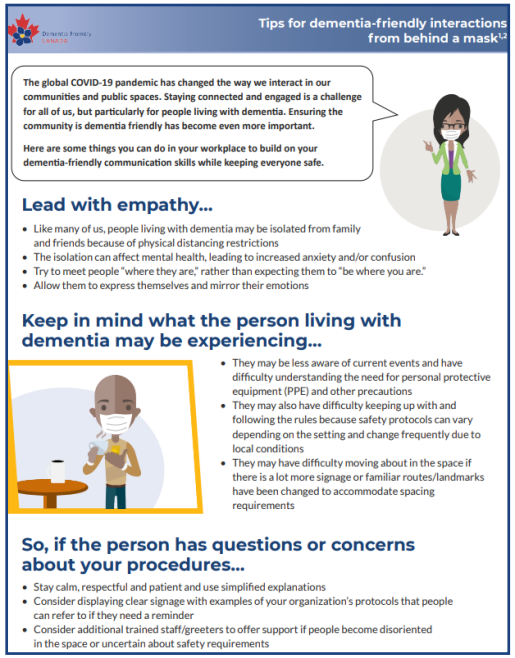
Pictures

- Use pictures/symbols to help make text easier to understand, but keep in mind that too many pictures can be confusing
- Ensure the pictures have a purpose and match the content

Format

For ease of reading, use:
- 14 point font
- A typeface such as Arial, Times New Roman, or Calibri
- Plenty of white space
- Bullet points, **bold text** and headings to separate information and highlight important pieces
- Good contrast between text and background colours

Avoid:
- *Italics* – they are difficult to read
- ALL CAPS – they are difficult to read and can seem like "yelling"
- Cursive or unusual fonts such as *Brush Script*, Comic, Ravie, etc.



Tips for dementia-friendly interactions from behind a mask[1,2]

The global COVID-19 pandemic has changed the way we interact in our communities and public spaces. Staying connected and engaged is a challenge for all of us, but particularly for people living with dementia. Ensuring the community is dementia friendly has become even more important.

Here are some things you can do in your workplace to build on your dementia-friendly communication skills while keeping everyone safe.

Lead with empathy...

- Like many of us, people living with dementia may be isolated from family and friends because of physical distancing restrictions
- The isolation can affect mental health, leading to increased anxiety and/or confusion
- Try to meet people "where they are," rather than expecting them to "be where you are."
- Allow them to express themselves and mirror their emotions

Keep in mind what the person living with dementia may be experiencing...

- They may be less aware of current events and have difficulty understanding the need for personal protective equipment (PPE) and other precautions
- They may also have difficulty keeping up with and following the rules because safety protocols can vary depending on the setting and change frequently due to local conditions
- They may have diffculty moving about in the space if there is a lot more signage or familiar routes/landmarks have been changed to accommodate spacing requirements

So, if the person has questions or concerns about your procedures...

- Stay calm, respectful and patient and use simplified explanations
- Consider displaying clear signage with examples of your organization's protocols that people can refer to if they need a reminder
- Consider additional trained staff/greeters to offer support if people become disoriented in the space or uncertain about safety requirements

Dementia Friendly Communities

For more information, visit www.alzheimer.ca/ns
or call our InfoLine at 1-800-611-6345



A Dementia Friendly Community supports, respects and includes people living with dementia and their partners in care in the places they live, work and play.

A dementia friendly community can support people living with dementia by reducing anxiety, stigma and frustration.





Both social and physical environments can help support people living with dementia, including the ways we communicate and the design of a space.

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Building Dementia Friendly Communities

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SUPPORTIVE, RESPECTFUL, INCLUSIVE



A Dementia Friendly Community supports, respects and includes people living with dementia and their partners in care in the places they live, work and play. It's a community that values contribution, opportunity and choice. **It's YOUR community!**

Dementia friendly community members:

- Know a person living with dementia is more than their diagnosis.
- Understand dementia can affect a person's cognition, behaviour, emotions and physical capabilities.
- Recognize the signs of dementia and know how to communicate effectively and respectfully.



What makes a community dementia friendly?

Dementia friendly interactions: Social considerations, such as ways you can communicate effectively with someone living with dementia.

Dementia friendly spaces: Physical considerations, such as ways you can optimize your space to be dementia friendly.

Dementia friendly businesses: Organizational considerations such as ways to adapt policies, practices and services to be more dementia friendly.

When successful, the social and physical environment can help support people living with dementia by reducing anxiety, stigma and frustration. Dementia friendly principles make spaces more supportive, inclusive and accessible for **everybody!**



To learn more, call 1-800-611-6345 or email beth.house@asns.ca

Our Own Tools

DEMENTIA FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES
NOVA SCOTIA

Thank you for your patience cards

Thank you for your patience.

I have a memory condition and may need a few extra moments.

Your understanding is appreciated.



Thanks for helping make your community more dementia friendly!

Scan Me

alzheimer.ca/ns/cards

1-800-611-6345

@alzheimerns

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Disability is NOT determined solely by the person's abilities.

Disability is created when the social and/or physical environment do not allow the full participation of people with physical, mental, cognitive or sensory impairment.

Disability is created for people living with dementia when programs, facilities, or services are not designed to accommodate them.

Did you know?

All of our Programs and Services are offered free of charge thanks to our government partners and generous donors.

Every dollar helps advance our mission of providing *Help for Today and Hope for Tomorrow*.



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Questions about dementia?

We are here to help.

Dementia Helpline 1-800-611-6345

alzheimer@asns.ca

www.alzheimer.ca/ns

