

How to be a friend to someone with dementia



Valeria Ochoa
Community Educator

Learning Objectives



- Know what makes a good friend.
- Understand feelings accompanied by diagnosis.
- Learn what dementia is and what the symptoms are.
- Learn how to be a friend to someone with dementia and obtain conversation tips.

What do you do to be a good friend?



Listen

Phone call

Follow up



Offer help

Have a laugh

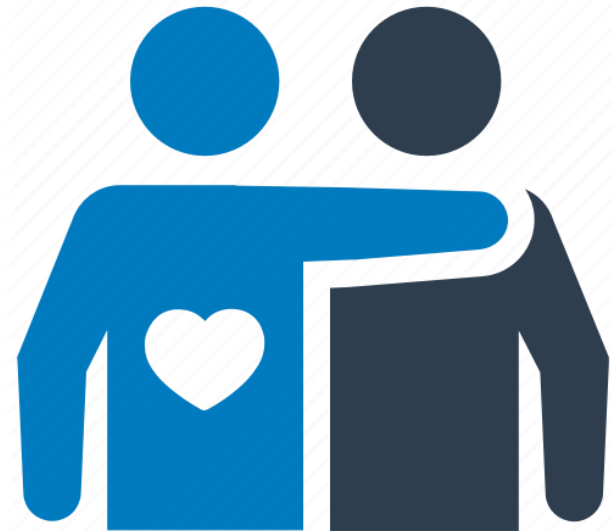
Give advice

Social activities

What makes a good friend?



- Accepts you as you are and is non-judgmental.
- You can share things that you can't share with others.
- They respect each other as equals.
- Listens and is there for you.



When a friend is diagnosed with dementia



You may feel...

- Shock and denial.
- Stressed and anxious.
- Feeling at a loss, helpless.
- You don't understand the situation.



When a friend is diagnosed with dementia



Your friend may feel...

- Loss.
- Sadness.
- Confusion.
- Anxiety.
- Embarrassment.
- Fear.
- Frustration.
- Anger.
- Paranoia.



“**Changes** will occur as a result of **dementia**, but important elements of the **friendship still remain.**”



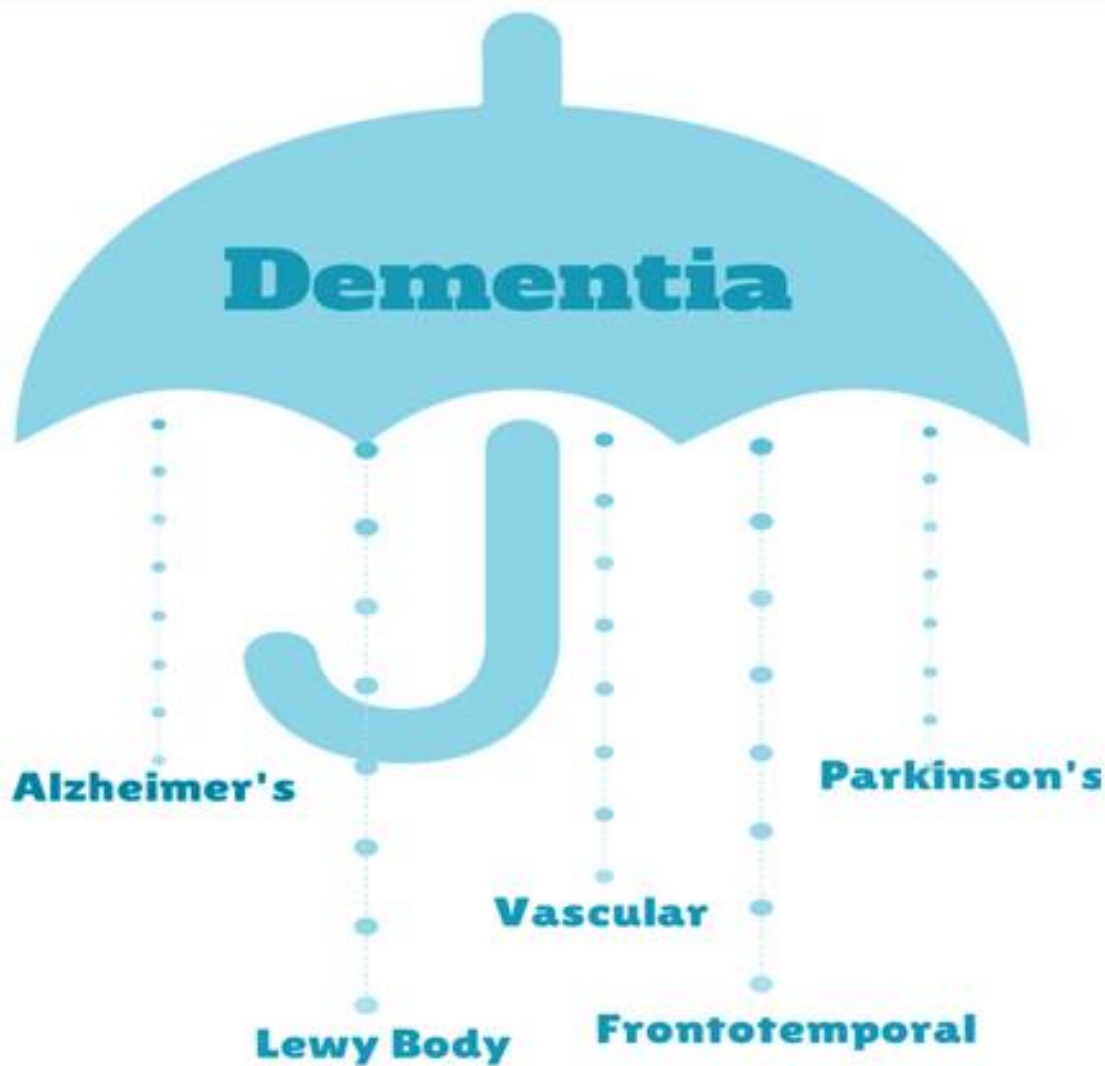
What is dementia?



Severe cognitive deficiency that disrupts daily activities.

- Dementia is caused by damage to brain cells.
- Many dementias are progressive.





Dementia



Most common type of dementia?

Alzheimer's

- Alzheimer's disease accounts for 60 to 80 percent of cases.

Dementia



Which is the second most common?

Vascular dementia

- Vascular dementia, which occurs after a stroke, is the second most common dementia type.

Symptoms of dementia



- Memory loss.
- Communication and language difficulties.
- Inability to focus and pay attention.
- Poor reasoning and judgment.
- Lack of visual perception.



Things to keep in mind



- Every person with dementia is unique and the progression of dementia will be different for everyone.
- People living with dementia are working very hard to make sense of their world, to see through the confusion and deal with their symptoms.



Things to keep in mind



- Feelings of confusion, grief and loss, and even anger, are normal feelings caused by dementia.
- Your friend may forget your name, but they will remember that they like you.
- Don't take personally mistakes and mix ups due to a person's memory loss.



How to be a friend



Communication tips:

- Ask one question or make one statement at a time.
- Help fill in blanks but don't take over.
- Try to use positive language.
 - Example: "let's enjoy the moment"
- Use repetition.
- Keep language simple.



How to be a friend



Communication tips:

- Use good timing by matching your conversational pace to your friend's.
- Remember body language and non-verbal communication.
 - Example: your tone of voice.
- Be aware to signs of fatigue.
- Use humor.



Conversation starters



Use prompts to help your friend recall events

- “I really enjoyed our walk around the park yesterday.”
- “I am looking forward to Sam’s visit this evening.”
- “It was so lovely that your grandson Luke made this card for you.”



Interests to experience with your friend



- Go bird watching at the park.
- Attend a religious service.
- Look at photos together.
- Read a book out loud.
- Play music and sing .
- Watch a movie.



Interests to experience with your friend



- Do gardening or water flowers inside home.
- Do a simple puzzle together.
- Stretch together.
- Go for a walk.
- Walk the dog.



Final tips

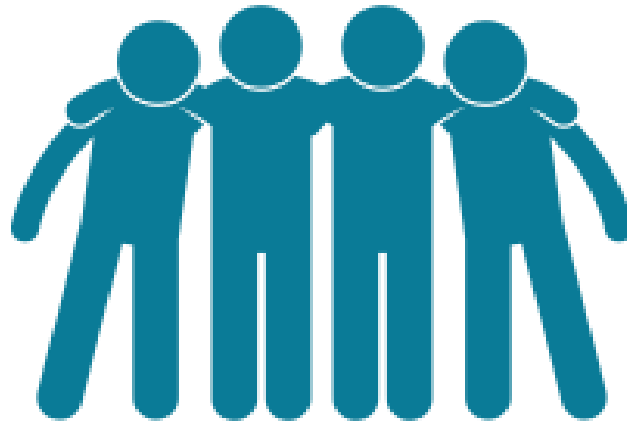


- Establish a visiting routine: say hello and introduce yourself.
- Be relaxed, be yourself and avoid forced cheerfulness.
- Accept that you may have to initiate conversation and things to do.
- Take something with you to share.
- Remember that silence is not necessarily a negative thing.

Final tips



- Choose a quiet, familiar location and introduce one thing at a time
- As you leave ask if you may visit again, smile and wave.



Southern Caregiver Resource Center

Caring for those who care for others

WE OFFER FREE
SUPPORT SERVICES
FOR FAMILY CAREGIVERS

(800) 827-1008 | caregivercenter.org



Respite



Short-Term
Counseling



Support
Groups



Specialized
Information



Education
&
Training



Reach2
Caregiver/
CALMA



Case
Management



Employer
Resources



Legal &
Financial
Consultation



Operation
Family
Caregiver

Tax ID 33-0402867



iCare Portal

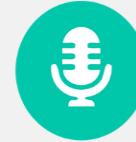
Visit www.caregivercenter.org
to explore SCRC's online resources

CAREGIVER CORNER

Watch quick tip videos on various aspects of being a caregiver.



PODCAST



Tune in to SCRC's "Let's Talk Caregiving" podcast for candid discussions on various caregiving topics.

FAMILY CAREGIVER CLASSES

Visit recorded live streamed classes and learn ways to manage your caregiving journey.



DIGITAL NEWSLETTER



SCRC's Wavelengths Newsletter is full of news updates, articles, and useful resources.



FOLLOW US ON OUR SOCIAL NETWORK



www.caregivercenter.org

www.scrc.care



Southern Caregiver Resource Center

3675 Ruffin Road, Suite 230
San Diego, CA 92123

1(800) 827-1008

www.caregivercenter.org

Valeria Ochoa

vochoa@caregivercenter.org