



# Information Session

People with dementia need to be understood and supported in their communities. You can help by becoming a Dementia Friend.

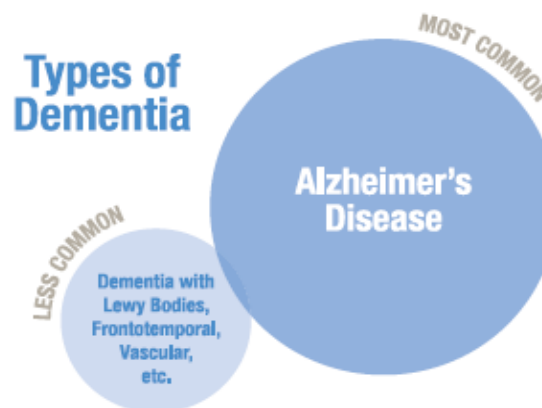
Visit [www.tempe.gov/dft](http://www.tempe.gov/dft) to learn more!

With permission of Dementia Friends, Alzheimer's Society, London UK

## What is Dementia?

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 Dementia with Lewy Bodies, Frontotemporal, and Vascular.



## Five Key Messages

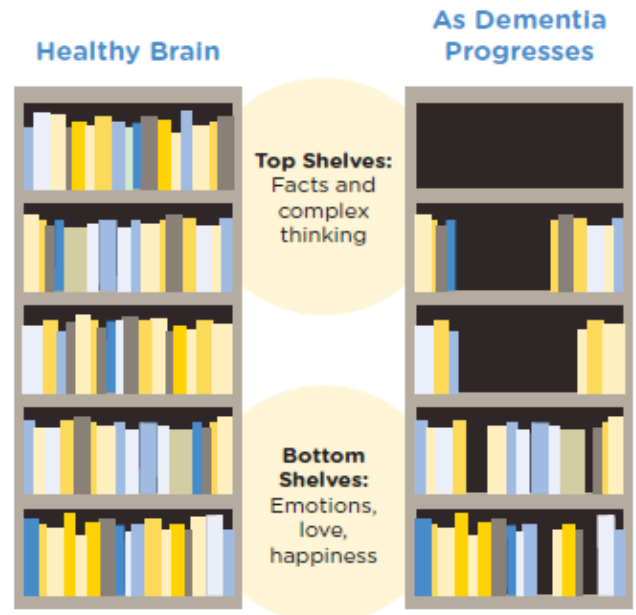
1. Dementia is not a normal part of aging.
2. Dementia is caused by diseases of the brain.
3. Dementia is not just about having memory problems.
4. It is possible to have a good quality of life with dementia.
5. There's more to the person than the dementia.

## 10 Early Signs & Symptoms

1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life.
2. Challenges in planning or solving problems.
3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure.
4. Confusion with time or place.
5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships.
6. New problems with words in speaking or writing.
7. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps.
8. Decreased or poor judgment.
9. Withdrawal from work or social activities.
10. Changes in mood and personality.

Source:

[www.alz.org/10-signs-symptoms-alzheimers-dementia.asp](http://www.alz.org/10-signs-symptoms-alzheimers-dementia.asp)



## Communication Practices

**Treat the person with dignity and respect.** Avoid talking past the person as if he or she isn't there.

**Be aware of your feelings.** Your tone of voice may communicate your attitude. Use positive, friendly facial expressions.

**Be patient and supportive.** Let the person know that you are listening and trying to understand.

**Offer comfort and reassurance.** If he or she is having trouble communicating, reassure them that it's okay.

**Avoid criticizing or correcting.** Don't tell the person what he or she is saying is 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.

**Offer a guess.** If the person uses the wrong word or cannot find a word, try guessing the right word.

**Encourage nonverbal communication** by pointing or using gestures.



## Conversation Tips

When approaching the person with dementia and starting a conversation:

- Come from the front, identify yourself, and keep good eye contact. If seated, go down to that level.
- Call the person by their preferred name to get his/her attention.
- Use short, simple phrases and repeat information as needed. Ask one question at a time.
- Speak slowly and clearly. Use a gentle and relaxed tone.
- Patiently wait for a response while the person takes time to process what you said.
- Provide a statement rather than ask a question.
- Avoid confusing and vague statements.
- Turn negatives into positives.
- Give visual cues.
- Avoid quizzing.
- Try using written notes or pictures.

## Understanding into Action

As a Dementia Friend, I will...

- \_\_\_\_\_ get in touch and stay in touch with someone I know living with dementia.
- \_\_\_\_\_ be patient.
- \_\_\_\_\_ be more understanding.
- \_\_\_\_\_ carry out this personal action:

## Community Resources

Get **educated** about Alzheimer's disease / related dementias:

- **Alzheimer's Association  
Desert Southwest Chapter**  
[www.alz.org/dsw](http://www.alz.org/dsw)  
1-800-272-3900 (24-hour Helpline)

Get help for your person & you:

- **Area Agency on Aging**  
[www.aaaphx.org](http://www.aaaphx.org)  
1-888-783-7500 (24-hour Helpline)