

**Dementia
Friends
Minnesota**

An ACT on Alzheimer's Initiative

Information Session

People with dementia need to be understood and supported in their communities.

You can help by becoming a Dementia Friend.

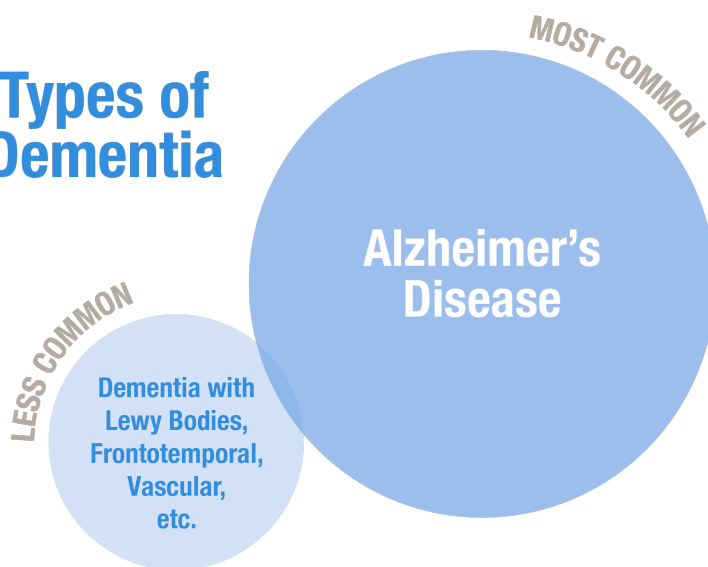
Visit www.actonalz.org/dementia-friends to learn more!

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.

Types of Dementia



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

Alzheimer's Disease vs. Normal Aging

10 Early Signs and Symptoms	Normal Aging
1. Memory loss that disrupts daily life	Sometimes forgetting names or appointments but remembering them later
2. Challenges in planning or solving problems	Making occasional errors when balancing a checkbook
3. Difficulty completing familiar tasks at home, at work or at leisure	Needing occasional help to use the settings on a microwave or to record a TV show
4. Confusion with time or place	Confused about the day of the week but recalling it later
5. Trouble understanding visual images and spatial relationships	Vision changes related to cataracts
6. New problems with words in speaking or writing	Sometimes having trouble finding the right word
7. Misplacing things and losing the ability to retrace steps	Misplacing things from time to time and retracing steps to find them
8. Decreased or poor judgment	Making a bad decision once in awhile
9. Withdrawal from work or social activities	Sometimes feeling weary of work, family and social obligations
10. Changes in mood and personality	Developing very specific ways of doing things and becoming irritable when a routine is disrupted.

Source:

www.alz.org/10-signs-symptoms-alzheimers-dementia.asp

Broken Sentences Worksheet

Match the sentences in Column 1 to Column 2 by drawing a line from each sentence beginning to the corresponding sentence end. You should end up with five sentences that make sense and become five key messages about dementia!

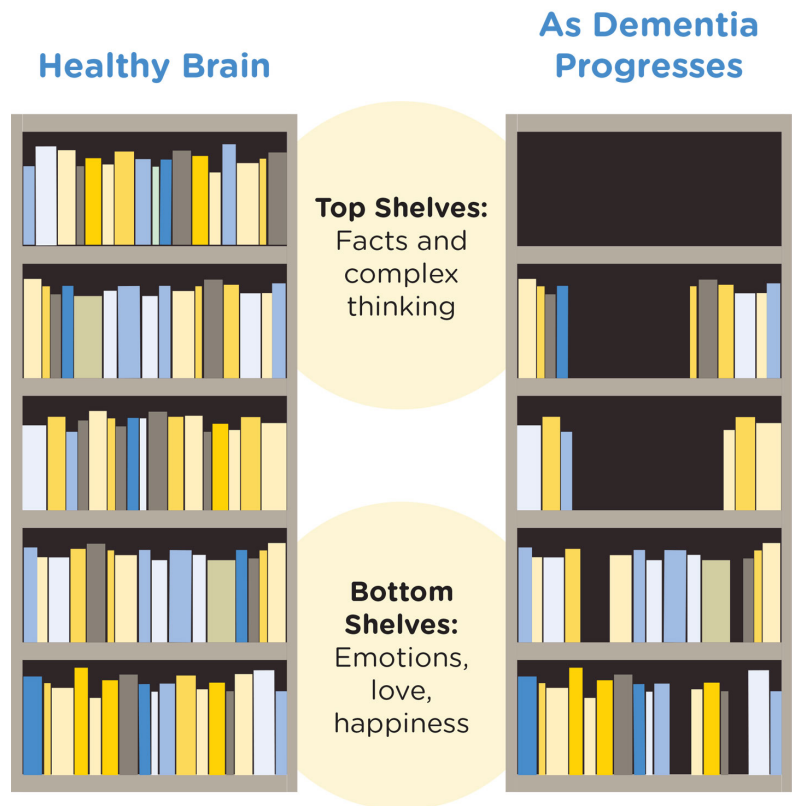
Column 1
1. Dementia is not ...
2. Dementia is caused by...
3. Dementia is not just...
4. It is possible to have a...
5. There's more to the person than...

Column 2
A. ...diseases of the brain.
B. ...the dementia.
C. ... good quality of life with dementia.
D. ... about having memory problems.
E. ...a normal part of aging.

Bookcase Story

Imagine a 70-year-old woman who has dementia. Now imagine there is a full bookcase beside her. Each book inside the bookcase represents one of her skills or memories.

On the top shelves are her memories of facts and her skill for thinking in complex or complicated ways. For people with dementia, the top or outer part of the brain is damaged first. Skills like math, using language and keeping one's behavior in check are in this part of the brain. In our bookcase story, these skills are also books on the top shelves.



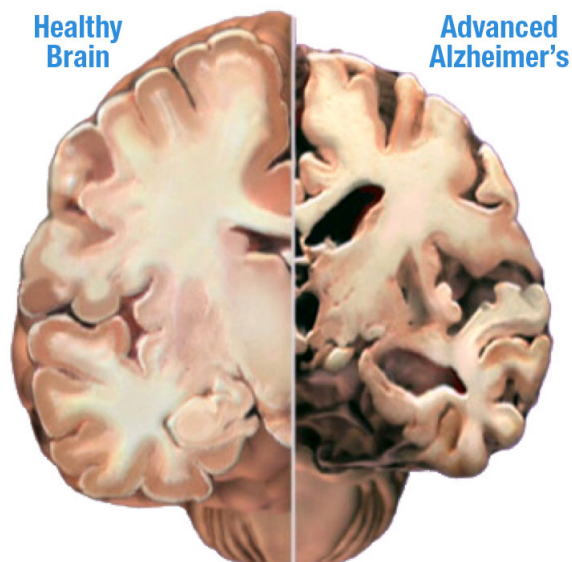
When dementia rocks the woman's bookcase, the books on the top shelf begin to fall out. The woman may not remember what she ate for breakfast, or that she has to pay for items at the drugstore or that someone came to visit this morning.

Emotions and feelings are lower down within the bookcase just like they are in the lower or inner part of the brain. This is the instinct area of the brain. Feelings like love, happiness, frustration and sensing respect reside here. As dementia continues to rock her bookcase, the books on these lower shelves stay for a much longer time.

The bookcase story helps explain different thinking skills and memories and the effects of dementia. Facts and complex thinking will fall away quickly. Emotions and feelings will remain longer.

Everyday Tasks

Write a step-by-step instruction list to complete a task you do daily or often. Make sure someone reading your list could follow the instructions successfully to complete the task.



Communication Practices

Consider these tips when communicating with a person with dementia.

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 the person is having trouble communicating, reassure them that it's okay and encourage the person to continue.

Avoid criticizing or correcting. Don't tell the person what was said was 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. Arguing usually only makes things worse and often increases agitation for the person with dementia.

Offer a guess. If the person uses the wrong word or cannot find a word, try guessing the right word. If you understand what the person means, finding the right word may not be necessary.

Encourage nonverbal communication. If you don't understand what is being said, ask the person to point or gesture.

Conversation Tips

When approaching the person with dementia and starting a conversation:

- Come from the front, identify yourself, and keep good eye contact. If the person isn't standing, go down to eye level.
- Call the person by their preferred name to get his or 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.

During the conversation:

- Provide a statement rather than ask a question. For example, say "The bathroom is right here," instead of asking, "Do you need to use the bathroom?"
- Avoid vague statements about something you want the person to do. Speak directly: "Please come here. Your lunch is ready." Name an object or place. Rather than "Here it is," say "Here is your hat."
- Turn negatives into positives. Instead of saying, "Don't go there," say, "Let's go here."
- Give visual cues. Point or touch the item you want the person to use or begin the task yourself.
- Avoid quizzing statements like "Do you remember when?"
- Try using written notes or pictures as reminders if the person is able to understand them.

Five Key Messages

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

Turn Your 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:

Resources in Your Community

Alzheimer's Association MN/ND 24/7 Helpline serves people with memory loss, caregivers, health care professionals, general public, diverse populations, and concerned friends and family. Helpline provides referrals to local community programs and services, dementia-related education, crisis assistance and emotional support. 1-800-272-3900 or www.alz.org/mnnd

Senior LinkAge Line® provides information and assistance and connects people with resources in their community. 1-800-333-2433 or www.MinnesotaHelp.info®