

## Talking about dementia

**The words used to talk about dementia can have a significant impact on how people with dementia are viewed and treated in our community.**

Appropriate language must be:

- » Accurate
- » Respectful
- » Inclusive
- » Empowering
- » Non stigmatising

It is important to use language that focuses on the abilities (not deficits) of people with dementia to help people stay positively and meaningfully engaged, and retain feelings of self-worth.

### Talking about dementia

The following terms/phrases are preferred when talking about dementia:

- » Dementia
- » Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia
- » A form of dementia
- » A type of dementia
- » Symptoms of dementia

**The following terms/phrases should not be used:**

- » Dementing illness
- » Demented
- » Affliction
- » Senile dementia
- » Senility
- » Going on a journey

### Talking about a person with dementia

The following terms/phrases are preferred when talking about a person with dementia:

- » A person/people with dementia
- » A person/people living with dementia
- » A person/people with a diagnosis of dementia

**Do not use:**

- » Sufferer
- » Victim
- » Demented person
- » Dementing illness
- » Dements
- » Afflicted
- » Offenders, absconders or perpetrators
- » Patient (when used outside the medical context)
- » Subject
- » Vacant dement
- » He/she's fading away or disappearing
- » Empty shell
- » Not all there
- » Losing him/her or someone who has lost their mind
- » He/she's an attention seeker
- » Inmates (referring to people with dementia in care facilities)
- » An onion with the layers peeling away
- » Slang expressions that are derogatory, for example, delightfully dotty, away with the fairies, got a kangaroo loose in the back paddock, a couple of cents short.
- » 'They' (talking about all people with dementia rather than the individual)

## Younger onset dementia

Refers to people under 65 years old who have been diagnosed with any form of dementia.

Do not use:

- » Pre-senile dementia
- » Early onset dementia

Early onset can also refer to the first symptoms of dementia at any age. To avoid confusion it is best if Younger Onset Dementia is used.

## Carers and Family members

Preferred terms:

- » Living with/caring for/supporting a person who has dementia

Some people prefer the term carer while others will prefer their relationship (i.e. husband, wife, mother, daughter etc.). Where possible check with the individual person to their preferred term.

## The impacts of dementia

The preferred terms when talking about the impacts of dementia are:

- » Disabling
- » Challenging
- » Life changing
- » Stressful

The following terms should not be used:

- » Hopeless
- » Unbearable
- » Impossible
- » Tragic
- » Devastating
- » Painful

## Behaviours

Preferred term

- » Expressions of unmet need

Do not use:

- » Behaviour(s) of concern
- » Challenging behaviours
- » Difficult behaviours

For symptoms do not use:

- » Difficult
- » Faded away, empty shell or not all there
- » Disappearing
- » Aggressor
- » Wanderer
- » Obstructive
- » Wetter
- » Poor feeder
- » Vocaliser
- » Sexual disinhibitor
- » Nocturnal
- » Screamer
- » Violent offender

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For support on your dementia journey, information about dementia and how to access services to support you and your loved ones please contact our customer support team on **1300 66 77 88** or [support@alzheimerswa.org.au](mailto:support@alzheimerswa.org.au) or visit [alzheimerswa.org.au](http://alzheimerswa.org.au)