

LONG TERM CARE COMMUNITY COALITION

Advancing Quality, Dignity & Justice

COMPASSIONATE DEMENTIA CARE: TOOLS AND TIPS FOR FAMILIES AND CARE TEAMS

FACT SHEET FOR INDIVIDUALS LIVING AT HOME OR IN ASSISTED LIVING

Quality of life and quality of care are deeply connected. Every person – regardless of cognitive or physical challenges – deserves to live with dignity, respect, and as much independence as possible.

This tip sheet shares simple, practical strategies for family caregivers, home health aides, and assisted living staff to help ensure individuals living with dementia receive compassionate, high-quality care. In addition, you'll find information on dementia care training and support programs that can help strengthen your skills, improve care quality, and support your own well-being. For more information and resources, please visit our website, <https://nursinghome411.org/dementia-care-in-the-community>.

Why Person-Centered Care Matters

Dementia affects how a person thinks, communicates, and engages with the world. When caregivers understand and support each person's unique needs, routines, and preferences, it can reduce distress, improve cooperation, and enhance the individual's comfort and dignity. Research also shows that person-centered care improves mood, reduces behavioral challenges, and may even reduce hospitalizations.

Care Practices That Support Quality of Life

Care in the home and assisted living settings should follow key principles that respect and support the individual's needs, preferences, and abilities. Caregivers should aim to:

- ⇒ **Create a safe, familiar, and comforting environment.**
- ⇒ **Engage individuals in meaningful activities** tailored to their interests, history, and current abilities.
- ⇒ **Honor personal routines and preferences**, including cultural and spiritual practices.
- ⇒ **Communicate clearly and calmly**, using visual cues, gentle tone, and simple language.
- ⇒ **Promote independence** by encouraging the person to do as much as they can for themselves, even if it takes more time.
- ⇒ **Ensure consistency in caregiving staff** to reduce anxiety and build trust.
- ⇒ **Involve the individual and their family in care decisions** whenever possible, respecting their voice and choices.

The Value of Training & Support for Caregivers

Caring for someone with dementia can be rewarding, but the right training can make a big difference.

- ⇒ **Caregiver-friendly training programs** offer practical, easy-to-understand tools for communication, managing challenging behaviors, and daily care routines.
- ⇒ **Support services** like respite care, counseling, and caregiver support groups can help reduce stress and prevent burnout.

Dementia Care Training Providers

There are numerous programs available from both for-profit and non-profit providers. Following is a small sample. Please note that inclusion below does not indicate endorsement.

In addition, the Alzheimer's Association has a training and certification program and recognizes a range of programs. For more information, visit

<https://www.alz.org/professionals/professional-providers/dementia-care-training-certification>.

[Caregivers As Partners in Care Teams](https://carepartners.ucsf.edu/). (<https://carepartners.ucsf.edu/>)

- Caregivers As Partners in Care Teams (CAP-CT) is a national training program from the University of California at San Francisco. It is designed to equip healthcare professionals with the skills and confidence to actively involve family caregivers in patient care. By integrating caregivers into care teams, the program aims to enhance patient outcomes, reduce hospital readmissions, and improve overall satisfaction for both patients and their caregivers.
- Cost: Free

[Health Resources and Services Administration \(HRSA\) Training](https://bhw.hrsa.gov/alzheimers-dementia-training).

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- The federal Health Resources & Services Administration has a wide variety of dementia training materials and learning modules for both professional and family caregivers.
- Cost: Free

[Activated Insights](https://activatedinsights.com/training/). (<https://activatedinsights.com/training/>)

- Activated Insights Training offers user-friendly online courses for senior living and home-based caregivers to enhance skills, build confidence, and support regulatory compliance.
- Cost: \$125

[CARES® Dementia Basics™ Online Training Program](https://hcinteractive.com/). (<https://hcinteractive.com/>)

- CARES® is an award-winning, evidence-based online dementia care training program that teaches the 5-step CARES® Method™ alongside best practices from the Alzheimer's Association.
- Cost: \$199