Seven simple tips for living well with dementia

Dementia Australia has released seven tips to show how a little support can make a positive difference in the lives of people living with dementia.

With dementia affecting close to half a million Australians, a number that is expected to double in the next 25 years, it is important to support people living with dementia to live well for as long as possible.

The seven tips list some simple, yet effective, ways to support them to do so:

- Make home life easier for me with a few smart changes
- Give me a little space to do things for myself
- Listen to me, don't always try to solve my problems
- Give me a minute to find the right words
- Remind me with clever technology
- Help me plan my own social life
- Encourage me to stay active and healthy

Dementia Australia has developed a range of resources for each tip, including an online home improvement tool to create a dementia-friendly home and a digital memory book to help access positive memories.

Dementia Advocates, who have a lived experience of dementia, shared how some simple measures helped them to continue to live active and rich lives.

Sarah Ashton lives with dementia and credits the technology set-up within her home as an important factor in enabling her to live by herself.

“I use technology in one form or another, even the most basic technology of a phone call, to be able to support me in terms of how I choose to live my life,” she said.

Juanita Hughes, who lives with dementia, said her advocacy work, church group and volunteering were extremely important in keeping her connected.

“When you are asked to be involved you feel valued – you feel like you’re still a member of the family, community or group,” she said. “You can’t explain what that feels like – it really makes you feel valued.”

Dementia Australia CEO Maree McCabe said the seven tips were developed in response to results from a Dementia Australia survey1 that found 63 per cent of people living with dementia who responded to the survey believe discrimination against those living with dementia is common.

“What these findings say is that discrimination stems from a lack of understanding and knowledge of dementia – what it is and how it impacts people,” Ms McCabe said. “People living with dementia can continue to live well for many years after their diagnosis.”

All seven tips on how to support someone living with dementia, as well as the associated resources, are available on the Dementia Australia website: https://discrimination.dementia.org.au/action-week/

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1 Dementia Australia. Dementia Action Week Discrimination Survey 2019, 5,767 valid responses collected from people living with dementia, families, carers, volunteers, health and aged care professionals, and people not directly impacted by dementia.
Dementia Australia is the source of trusted information, education and services for the estimated half a million Australians living with dementia, and the almost 1.6 million people involved in their care. We advocate for positive change and support vital research. We are here to support people impacted by dementia, and to enable them to live as well as possible. No matter how you are impacted by dementia or who you are, we are here for you.

For support, please contact the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500. An interpreter service is available and the Helpline is open 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday excluding public holidays. The National Dementia Helpline is funded by the Australian Government. People looking for information can also visit dementia.org.au.

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Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people living with dementia are some of the most vulnerable people in our community right now. Until further notice, Dementia Australia will no longer facilitate any face-to-face, in-person interviews with people living with dementia, their families and carers. We will continue to facilitate interviews by video conferencing and telephone calls.

When talking or writing about dementia please refer to Dementia-Friendly Language Guidelines.

The seven tips – images

1. If changes are being made in the home, the person with dementia will find them more useful and easier to accept if they’ve been involved in the planning.

2. If you give us a chance, we may very well surprise you with what we can do; not what you think we can’t.

3. The problem with stepping in and doing everything for us is, in actual fact, it disempowers us.
When people take the time, it makes me feel accepted and I feel understood.

- Eileen, Dementia Advocate.

I use technology in one form or another, even the most basic technology of a phone call, to be able to support me in terms of how I chose to live my life.

- Sarah, Dementia Advocate.

When you are asked to be involved you feel valued – you feel like you’re still a member of the family, community or group.

- Juanita, Dementia Advocate.

When it comes to dementia, health and taking care of yourself, it’s a journey. Persistence pays off. There are big things we can’t control but try and do the little things better.

- Val, Dementia Advocate.