

# Tips for supporting a friend

This help sheet gives tips about how to support a friend with dementia and their family. Everyone living with dementia is unique, so when reading these tips, consider the person's abilities, the impact dementia is having on them and their symptoms.

If you have a friend with dementia, there are many ways to support the person and their family. You can make a difference, providing practical and emotional support. This might be the time your friend needs you the most.

You play an essential role in:

- supporting your friend
- listening without judgement
- respecting and accepting them as they are
- providing a link to their past and future.

While dementia may cause some things to change over time, you can find activities to enjoy together and help your friend to keep doing the things they love.

## How to support a friend

Dementia can affect your friend's ability to communicate and express how they feel. Below are some tips about supporting a friend with dementia.

### 1. Help your friend maintain independence

Support your friend to keep their independence for as long as possible. Try not to take over. Give them the time and space they need.

### 2. Be a good listener

When you are talking together:

- listen to your friend
- give them time to remember the word they want to use

- try not to finish their sentences
- only consider a respectful prompt of support if they lose track of what they are saying
- consider your surroundings and noise levels; try and find a quiet space with few distractions.

### **3. How to ask questions**

For someone with dementia, it can be confusing to be asked questions needing a detailed response.

If you have questions for your friend:

- Ask questions they can reply to with “yes” or “no” answers.
- Ask questions that offer suggestions to help them respond (such as “would you like to sit here or sit there?”).

### **4. Be realistic about memory loss**

If your friend has memory loss, they may not remember everything, including even recent events. Be understanding and provide a gentle prompt if they forget something special.

## **How to support a member of someone’s family**

When someone has dementia, it affects everyone in their family differently. Some family members may find it difficult to talk about their feelings or ask for help.

There are many ways you can support them.

### **1. Keep in touch**

Stay in touch in any way you can. You can offer practical support or emotional support by talking and listening.

### **2. Do little things – they mean a lot**

Help with day-to-day things. For example, if you are running an errand yourself, check to see if there is anything they need.

### 3. Give them a break

- Offer to spend time with the person with dementia to give family members some free time.
- Encourage family members to keep up their hobbies or interests.

### 4. Be specific when offering help

Offer practical assistance.

Ask if you can help with:

- gardening
- cooking
- shopping
- a particular task.

Or you could offer to take the person living with dementia out for a walk or a coffee.

### 5. Be a good listener

- Try to acknowledge the changes the person with dementia and their family are experiencing.
- Listen with compassion. You don't need to provide answers. If you think they may need information or advice, suggest calling the **National Dementia Helpline** on **1800 100 500**.
- Try not to question or judge, but rather support and accept.

## Learn more about dementia

There are different types of dementia. Learning about the type of dementia your friend has will help you be more supportive. Information is available on our website: [dementia.org.au](https://dementia.org.au).

## Additional reading and resources

- **Dementia Australia library service**  
[dementia.org.au/library](https://dementia.org.au/library)
- **Family and friends matter**  
[dementia.org.au/resources/family-and-friends-matter](https://dementia.org.au/resources/family-and-friends-matter)
- **Dementia-friendly communities**  
[dementiafriendly.org.au](https://dementiafriendly.org.au)

### Further information

Dementia Australia offers support, information, education and counselling.

**National Dementia Helpline: 1800 100 500**

**For language assistance: 131 450**

**Visit our website: [dementia.org.au](https://dementia.org.au)**