

Tips for writing & reporting about people living the dementia journey

The Alzheimer Society has developed language guidelines to help tackle the fear and stigma surrounding Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias. We hope that these preferred terms will promote the use of respectful language, and encourage you to use them when writing and reporting.

Person Centered Language

The purpose of person centred language is to recognize the impact of language on thoughts and actions, to ensure language does not diminish the uniqueness and intrinsic value of each person.

Language Commonly Used	Problem With Current Language	Person-centered Language
Burden of caregiving/ Caregiver burden	Implies that caregiving is always a burden The individual interpretation of caregiving should be up to the caregiver The term can help validate the burden some caregivers experience, but should not be assumed	Effects of caregiving Effects of providing care In the context of caregiving, it is important to be specific and name the issues. e.g. Caregiver states she is exhausted. Has not slept for three nights Caregiver stress Meaningful caregiver experience
Demented/Demented person	Term connotes that the person is completely incapable	Person with dementia Person living with dementia The person; the individual
Caregiver	May offend people in early stages who do not need “caregivers” but rather people who will support them	Ask the person what terms they prefer on an individual basis. Examples may include: Family member, caregiver, partner in care

	- Caregivers may not identify themselves in this way (e.g. "I am his wife, not his caregiver")	
Loved one(s)	Relationship between people and their family/friends may have been problematic Funereal in tone	Person/people with dementia Name the relationship, (mother, husband, etc) Family member Friend
Patient	Should be used only within context of the medical profession	Person/people with dementia
Sufferer Suffering	Does not support the concept of "personhood"	Person with dementia Person living with dementia

If you have questions or would like to speak about strategies for communicating, please contact the Alzheimer Society of Nova Scotia at 902-422-7961 and ask to speak to InfoLine.