

Community Conversation Facilitator Guide

Thank you for partnering with us to facilitate conversations around topics that we believe are vital for helping us live well with dementia. We are grateful for your support and hope this guide will be helpful for you as you host your Community Conversation.

As people living with dementia, we have unique perspectives about what it's like to live with dementia and navigate the topics we are sharing with you. To understand our work as the National Council of Dementia Minds, we ask that you use thoroughly review the information provided in this guide prior to hosting a Community Conversation.

We want you to feel comfortable and know how to encourage organic conversation, recognize when the conversation veers off topic or away from people living with dementia as the experts, and how to gently guide the focus back to the intention of Community Conversations which is learning from the perspective of people living with dementia.

Strategies for facilitation

Participants will come to the conversation with formal and informal knowledge about dementia. Let them know that we honor and respect their knowledge and experience, but we ask that they put their previous experiences aside and listen to what the persons living with dementia in the videos and in the room with them are sharing before joining the conversation.

Please invite participants to be open to new ideas and be curious about what it's like to live with dementia from our perspective, the perspective of people living well with dementia.

1. **Create an environment of belonging** – everyone is welcome, we're all in this together regardless of our background, role or circumstances
2. **Prioritize relationships** – conversations are about learning how to keep relationships at the forefront when partnering with people living with dementia
3. **Provide encouragement and support** - guide participants through the experience you want them to give persons living with dementia
 - **listen** to connect with us and our experience, not correct or fix us
 - **be curious** about what it's like to live with dementia from our perspective
 - **suspend judgement and have an open mind** about what you're hearing or thinking
 - **empathize** with the person living with dementia that is sharing their experience
 - **show respect** for the feelings of others whether you understand them or not
 - **pause for reflection** after someone speaks

4. **Generate knowledge for action** – based on the topic discussed, ask participants to identify actions they can take to apply what they’ve learned in their lives and communities
5. **Balance the challenges of living with dementia with hope for what’s possible** – highlight the positive aspects of what people living with dementia are sharing while validating the struggles
6. **Let the conversation evolve naturally out of the prompts** – encourage organic conversation by asking participants to expand on their responses by saying something like “tell me more...”
7. **Leave participants feeling hopeful, more equipped, connected** – end with positive takeaways, actions they can take, and ways to stay in communication with NCDM and other participants

Points to prioritize

- The **perspectives of persons living well with dementia drive the conversation**. They are the experts.
- Partnering with persons living with dementia depends on **prioritizing relationships** through connection and community.
- **Empathy and compassion** are the foundation for building and sustaining relationships.
- All messages about dementia should be balanced to exemplify the coexistence of **the challenges as well as the positive aspects of living with dementia**.

Tips for respectfully engaging people living with dementia in conversation

1. Pause after someone has spoken and when transitioning to a new question to give people time to process what’s occurring.
2. Pay attention to what is being communicated non-verbally.
3. Avoid asking questions that require a specific or yes/no answer.
4. Use a questionless question style of communication
 - Use declarative sentences as a prompt for engagement
 - Focus on the underlying emotion the person is conveying not just the words they are saying
5. Words to use and words to avoid – *see full document*

Conversation Guides

Conversation guides are available for each topic and corresponding video to help you facilitate the conversation. Guides include **5-6 discussion prompts that support multiple audiences** (e.g. persons living with dementia, care partners, family, friends, professionals).

Please review the conversation guide well in advance of your Community Conversation to insure you are familiar with the topic and discussion prompts and have time to ask NCDM staff any questions you may have prior to the meeting.

How to set-up the physical and online environment to support connection

1. In-person
 - a. Arrange chairs in circle or semi-circle for discussion
 - b. Ensure all participants can:
 - i. View and hear the video, the facilitator and each other
 - c. Offer option to have smaller two or three person groups to discuss questions then come together to share insights
2. Virtual
 - a. Request that all participants have their video and mic enabled
 - b. Request that all participants use “Gallery view”

Staying Connected Post-Conversation

Please stay connected and continue the conversation by:

1. Following NCDM on social media
2. Joining the NCDM community
3. Sharing what you’ve learned with everyone in every way you can