



What Dementia Changes & What It Doesn't

A grounding guide for caregivers

WHY THIS MATTERS

Dementia can make caregiving feel disorienting.

Things change. Reactions change.

Relationships feel unfamiliar.

Knowing what dementia truly affects — and what remains can help you respond with more confidence, less guilt, and a whole lot more grace.

This guide is here to steady you.

WHAT DEMENTIA CHANGES

Memory

- Recent memories are often affected first
- Details, dates, and sequences can become unreliable
- Information may be forgotten moments after it's shared

Important reminder: Forgetting is not intentional. Repeating yourself is not failing.

Communication

- Word-finding becomes difficult
- Sentences may trail off or jump topics
- Processing spoken information takes longer

What helps:

Short sentences • one idea at a time • patience over correction

Behavior & Reactions

- Increased anxiety or fear
- Suspicion or mistrust
- Repetitive questions
- Emotional reactions that feel “out of character”

These behaviors are often responses to confusion or overwhelm — not choices.

Sense of Time & Place

- Confusion about the date, time, or location
- Mixing past and present
- Asking to “go home” while already home

To them, the experience feels real — even when it doesn't match reality.

WHAT DEMENTIA DOES NOT CHANGE

(This part matters deeply.)

The Need for Love & Connection

Dementia does not erase the need to feel:

- Safe
- Valued
- Loved
- Included

Tone, touch, and presence still reach them — even when words don't.

Core Personality

While filters may change, core traits often remain:

- Humor
- Gentleness
- Concern for others
- Faith, habits, preferences

You may still see familiar glimpses — and those moments matter.

Personhood & Dignity

- Dementia does not turn an adult into a child.
- It does not erase a lifetime of experiences.
- It does not remove the right to respect.

They are still a whole person — navigating a brain that no longer cooperates.

The Ability to Feel

Even when logic fades, emotions remain strong.

They may forget why they're upset — but they still feel the upset.

How we respond matters more than being right.

A GENTLE REFRAME FOR CAREGIVERS

- Dementia changes abilities.
- It does not erase humanity.
- You are not failing because things feel hard.
They feel hard because this is hard.
- You do not have to fix everything to offer comfort.
- Presence often matters more than perfection.

WHEN YOU'RE DOUBTING YOURSELF, COME BACK TO THIS

- This is a brain disease, not a personality problem
- You are responding to change, not causing it
- Love still lands — even when words don't
- You are allowed to grieve what's changed and honor what remains

Both can exist in the same heart.

NORA'S GENTLE NOTE

You are doing the best you can with information you never wanted to learn. That counts for more than you know.