



# HOST A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION:

## A Tool for Talking About the Dementia-Friendly Initiative in Your Community

When thinking about how your community can begin to be more inclusive of people living with dementia, hosting a conversation is a great place to start. By engaging in conversation, we can learn from one another, build connections, and share ideas that we can work together to achieve. It also helps keep us connected and inclusive of the diverse voices and experiences in our communities.

The purpose of this tool is to help guide you in hosting a conversation on the topic of dementia inclusivity in your local community. It includes some tips for success and some questions to get you started.

### HOW TO ORGANIZE A CONVERSATION

**There are many ways to organize a conversation in your community. Large or small, formal or informal, any approach will work.**

**Some examples include:**

- Advertise a community-wide virtual or in-person conversation for different individuals to come together to engage in conversation.
- If you are part of an existing community group that meets regularly, organize a discussion within that group.
- Include a conversation as an agenda item at your local council or business meetings.
- Have a conversation with your neighbours, friends, and family members.



### HOW TO GET STARTED

**Choose an Accessible and Welcoming Space:**

- A space that is familiar and accessible to community members and allows for physical distancing.
- A space that has a welcoming atmosphere, comfortable seating, nearby washrooms, and is free from distractions.



### If you are keeping things virtual:

- Choose the online hosting platform you are familiar with (e.g., Zoom). Create a meeting invite/link and send out to those you like to attend. Ask others to share the link as well.
- As host, join the call early to prepare any technological questions or issues.



### Planning and Supplies:

- Consider bringing name tags for people to identify themselves. If you are meeting online, invite attendees to write their name in the chat.
- Have pens and paper available for people to take notes if they would like.
- Assign a note taker to capture what is discussed.
- Prepare a sign-up and/or referral sheet for people to leave their contact information to stay connected or suggest others in the community to reach out to. You can share this via email if meeting online or ask attendees to send their information to the conversation host!



### Meaningful Engagement:

Before you host any type of conversation on the topic of dementia and inclusion, it's important to remember the importance of meaningful engagement. Meaningful engagement is a person-centered approach which encourages and invites people living with dementia to participate purposefully and actively. Check out the Alzheimer Society of Canada's [Resource Guide](#) for more information on how to incorporate this into your community engagement work.

### OPENING THE CONVERSATION

- Welcome people as they arrive and make time for them to introduce themselves. Thank them for participating.
- Explain the purpose of the conversation and why you and/or your group decided to get involved.
- Let people know that the ideas they share will be used to build consensus around how your community can begin to raise awareness around dementia and become more inclusive of those living with the disease.



## SETTING THE CONTEXT

Take a few minutes to set the context. One idea is to start by explaining what a dementia-friendly community is, to get people thinking):

*“A dementia-friendly community is a place where people living with dementia and their caregivers are supported, empowered, and included in community life. In a dementia-friendly community, community members foster an understanding and awareness of dementia, and those living with the disease are supported and encouraged to participate in their community to the fullest extent possible.”*

### Some Questions to Get you Started:

Pick and choose what works best for you or create your own! Be mindful of the time you allotted for your conversation when choosing how many questions to ask. Assign 5-10 minutes per question depending on the size of your group and length of your conversation.

- Why is it important to talk about dementia in our community? What do we know about dementia as a disease?
- What does an inclusive community mean? How do we know if our community is inclusive or not?
- What are some ways we can begin to raise awareness and better understand dementia in our community? Are there existing programs, groups, or organizations we can connect with? Are there examples from other communities you may have heard about?
- How can we begin to reach those affected by the disease to determine what is important to them?
- What are some ideas to spread awareness on this project? What do we see as some of the challenges our community faces as we begin this journey?



## CLOSING THE CONVERSATION

- Take a few minutes to wrap up by recapping what was discussed. Make time to debrief with the group and if there's time, ask everyone to share one thing they will take away from today's conversation.
- Thank everyone participating and remind them to fill out the sign-up/referral sheet or leave their contact information to keep updated and stay involved.



### References:

Alzheimer Society of Canada (2015). Meaningful Engagement of People living with Dementia: A Resource Guide.  
Collaborative for Healthy Aging and Care (2020). Creating an Inclusive Community for People Living with Dementia: Community Toolkit.  
Tamarack Institute. (2019). Deepening Community: A Conversation Guide.

