

Our attitude can impact on how we perceive the role of carer. With terminology slowly moving from “Carer” to “Care Partner”, perhaps it’s time to ponder what works best for you. Think about whether these reasons relate to you.

- Using the ‘carer’, terminology may imply that the person living with dementia is receiving care and has the potential to shift the relationship in a negative manner. Are you doing more than you really need to?
- This imbalance could prompt frustration for everyone.
- People living with dementia generally want to feel needed and useful, offering help where they can, and wanting to participate in meaningful activities whenever possible.

As a ‘care partner’, the partnership becomes more equal and may support an improved respect. One important aspect is to avoid the temptation to take on a parenting role, as this has the potential to increase agitation and/or withdrawal. Given the person wants to feel useful and needed becoming a child in the parent/child role, they may start to exhibit behaviours as expression of an unmet need.

A Supportive Care Partner/Carer Should be Mindful Of:

- Being in the moment, (being fully present with the person) and being mindful the person living with dementia may find it difficult to remember the past or the future and tend to live in the moment.
- Utilise effective listening skills, understanding, and lateral thinking to discover what that person is trying to communicate.
- Creating opportunities for spontaneity and laughter
- Accepting you can’t change the behaviour of the person living with dementia and reprimanding them may increase agitation.
- **If it is possible to change another person’s behaviour, we must first change our own.**

Example: The person living with dementia is brushing their teeth and stops, the brush in one hand and the toothpaste in the other hand. A care partner may choose to squeeze the toothpaste onto the brush by holding the persons hands and undertaking to put the toothpaste on the brush with the person. It does take a little longer but supports independence.