

# Introduction to Dementia Reference Sheet

## Identifying Dementia

Most share the some of the following symptoms:

- Decline in memory
- Alterations to 'normal' thinking
- Decline in ability to communicate
- Negative impacts to reasoning ability

Additionally, dementia involves *progressive decline*.

## Depression and Dementia

Practically speaking, making the distinction between depression and dementia is not a determination you should be making in your interactions with caregivers or their loved ones.

Due to the high number of medical complications that can mimic dementia symptoms, it is best for anyone concerned with cognitive decline to **seek a medical exam**.

## Communication Strategies

- If able, don't use the word dementia, and avoid explaining to the individual that they have it.
- Avoid trying to use rational or logic-based reasoning
- Think of your role conversationally as playing a part in their play instead of focusing on trying to "set them straight" or in trying to "make them understand"

## Contacts and Resources

**Northwest Regional Council, Aging and Disability Resources:** (360) 738-2500 [www.nwrcwa.org](http://www.nwrcwa.org)

- Comprehensive support services
- Case management
- Referrals

**Dementia Support Northwest:** 360.671.3316, [www.dementiasupportnw.org](http://www.dementiasupportnw.org)

- Family Caregiver Support Groups
- Staying Connected
- Project Lifesaver
- Professional Trainings and Education

**Dementia Action Collaborative:** <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/altsa/dementia-action-collaborative>

- The Dementia Roadmap:
- Dementia Legal Planning Toolkit