



# Living Life with Dignity and Purpose, Even in the Face of Dementia

We inevitably face some degree of waning skills and capabilities as we age and it can be difficult to remember in our youth centered culture that the later stage of life holds an abundance of gifts and joys. Of course, changing our individual and collective mindsets is easier said than done. Aging with dignity means we work to live life to the fullest--regardless of dementia, illness, or age. We owe it to ourselves, to our parents and grandparents, to our children and grandchildren, and to our larger community to work on transforming our outlook and addressing how to support people with dementia and their caregivers.

Helping others to live life with dignity is a way of thinking and doing things. In the care community, it is called being person-centered. It recognizes people as equal partners no matter their diagnosis. It means providing choices. It requires compassionate care. It doesn't expect people to fit into a box of 'norms', and it demands that we are flexible to the person's likes, dislikes, needs, desires, and moods.

There are 4 Critical elements of Person Centered Care

- 1) Belief in the ABSOLUTE VALUE of all human lives
- 2) Recognizing the uniqueness of each person requires an INDIVIDUALIZED approach
- 3) Looking at the world from the PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE of the person receiving your care and support
- 4) Supporting PSYCHOLOGICAL NEEDS (such as the need for belonging, having choices and purposeful work)

Living life with dignity and purpose is a universal need that spans all ages and cultures.

All people need:

- to be involved in the normal process of life;
- a calm and predictable routine;
- security and familiarity;
- to be involved in purposeful activity;
- to be recognized and honored for what makes us unique--our likes, dislikes, our strengths and weaknesses.

Our sense of identity and our feelings don't leave us with a diagnosis of dementia. Focusing on the person and not the disease is sometimes challenging, but deeply important. This mindset can make the difference in how well we support the person with dementia, and their caregiver, to live their unique life with joy, dignity and purpose.