



Accepting the Challenge

Support Group Facilitator Guide Conversation Starters Based on Each Training Module

Module 1: Neurodegeneration & Dementia Symptoms

Conversation Starter: Understanding the Brain and Dementia Symptoms

- What changes have you seen in your loved one's physical or cognitive abilities over time?
- How do you think brain changes, like neurodegeneration, affect daily life and behavior?
- What in this module helps you better understand what your loved one is going through?
- How have you seen dementia symptoms fluctuate? What challenges does that bring?
- Why do you think symptoms sometimes appear years after brain changes begin?

Module 2: Types of Dementia & Their Symptoms

Conversation Starter: Recognizing Different Dementias

- Have you cared for someone with a specific type of dementia, like Lewy Body or vascular dementia?
- How did symptoms differ from what you expected, and how did that change your care approach?
- How do you support someone when symptoms don't match a typical pattern?
- What has "When you've met one person with dementia, you've met one person with dementia" meant in your caregiving experience?

Module 3: Alzheimer's Disease & Cognitive Changes

Conversation Starter: Coping with Memory and Thinking Changes

- How have brain changes affected your loved one's memory, problem-solving, or personality?
- What's helped you cope with the emotional impact of these changes?
- How do memory challenges affect your routines or relationship?
- Have you experienced confabulation? How do you respond with compassion and calm?

Module 4: Language in Alzheimer's Disease

Conversation Starter: Supporting Communication Through Language Changes

- How has language loss affected your conversations with your loved one?
- Which communication skills have stayed stronger, and how do you encourage them?
- How can we respond when word-finding issues affect confidence or identity?
- What strategies help you support someone struggling to find the right words?
- If you could carry one takeaway from this session into your day-to-day care, what would it be?

Module 5: Dementia & Emotional Regulation

Conversation Starter: Navigating Emotional Ups and Downs

- What emotional or behavioral changes have you seen due to reduced impulse control?
- How do you manage resistance or challenging moments with patience?
- What techniques help de-escalate emotional situations?
- Can you share an experience and how you handled it?

Module 6: Positive Physical Approach

Conversation Starter: Building Trust Through Body Language

- How has approaching from the side, rather than head-on, changed your interactions?
- Why do you think soft touch and slow movements matter?
- How has using someone's preferred name affected how they respond to you?

Module 7: The Speed of Approach

Conversation Starter: Slowing Down to Build Connection

- Have you noticed reactions change when you approach slowly?
- What does "getting low" mean to you and how has it helped you connect?
- Can you share a moment when slowing your approach made a difference?

Module 8: Communication with Dementia

Conversation Starter: Speaking in Ways That Connect

- What tone, pitch, and speed of speaking work best in your experience?
- Which types of questions seem easiest for your loved one to understand?
- Have you used objects or props to guide conversation? What was the result?
- If you could carry one takeaway from this session into your day-to-day care, what would it be?

Module 9: Encouraging Participants & Conversations

Conversation Starter: Inspiring Engagement

- What helps you encourage activity without pushing too hard?
- How do you maintain autonomy while offering support?
- Have you “gone with the flow” instead of correcting - what happened?

Module 10: Supporting Individuals in Distress

Conversation Starter: Responding with Empathy

- What empathetic responses have helped you calm or comfort your loved one?
- How do validation and empathy change the outcome of a stressful moment?
- Can you share a time you joined your loved one’s reality instead of correcting?

Module 11: Cues and Support Techniques

Conversation Starter: Helping Through Gentle Cues

- What types of cues—touch, voice, visual—work best in your caregiving?
- How do you decide which cue to use?
- Have you used the Hand-under-Hand technique? What changed?

Module 12: GEMS States of Brain Change

Conversation Starter: Seeing the Strengths That Remain

- How do the GEMS states help you understand your loved one’s abilities?
- What have you noticed about care needs during the Amber state?
- Can you share a story of how focusing on strengths helped?

Module 13: Self-Care & Sensory Focus in GEMS States

Conversation Starter: Adapting Care for Each Stage

- What sensory experiences (music, touch, scent) have helped in late stages?
- What has helped you adapt care in the Pearl stage?
- How do later-stage changes affect your daily caregiving routines?

Module 14: Eating Support Strategies

Conversation Starter: Supporting Mealtime with Dignity

- Have you tried high-contrast plates or other visual supports? What worked?
- What approaches help with utensil use or hand-feeding?
- What small adjustments have improved the eating experience?

Module 15: Personal History & Meaningful Activities

Conversation Starter: Connecting Through the Past

- How has knowing your loved one's history improved your care?
- What activities or routines have sparked joy or engagement?
- Why do you think personal history is so important in dementia care?

Module 16: Challenging Behaviors & Self-Care

Conversation Starter: Rethinking Behavior & Caring for Ourselves

- How do you reframe "challenging behavior" in a more compassionate way?
- Have you used the Six Pieces of the Puzzle? What did it reveal?
- What self-care strategies help you recharge as a caregiver?
- How do you balance your well-being with caregiving demands?
- If you could carry one takeaway from this session into your day-to-day care, what would it be?