



Engage, Enable, Empower | Whakauru, Whakahohe, Whakamana

Information sheet

Just like everyone, people living with dementia want to lead full and active lives doing the things they enjoy in their communities¹. But stigma, the progression of dementia, and the presence of physical and social barriers can make daily life and ordinary routines more difficult².

People with dementia tell us that they want to maintain their independence for as long as possible. However, many feel they have little control over their life choices³. Physical and social barriers may result in them withdrawing from their familiar routines, places, and activities. This can lead to increased feelings of loneliness, social isolation, depression, and physical inactivity⁴.

“This is our story” shared the voices of 49 people living with dementia in Aotearoa. They told us that participating in activities helped to reduce their sense of stigma about having dementia⁵. They also highlighted:

- People living with dementia have diverse lives
- Having dementia affects people differently
- People with dementia live meaningful lives
- People with dementia value their independence
- Living positively with dementia is not easy
- Care partners support people with dementia to live positively⁶

¹ A dementia-friendly New Zealand means that people living with dementia can live independently in the community for as long as possible, getting the help and support they need (Alzheimers New Zealand, 2020).

² <https://alzheimers.org.nz/explore/dementia-friendly-nz/dementia-friendly-communities/>: Dementia Friendly Communities toolkit

³ <https://alzheimers.org.nz/explore/research/>: This is our story; A qualitative research report on living with dementia

⁴ <https://alzheimers.org.nz/explore/dementia-friendly-nz/dementia-friendly-communities/>: Dementia Friendly Communities toolkit

⁵ <https://alzheimers.org.nz/explore/research/evaluation-of-services-for-people-living-with-dementia/>

⁶ <https://alzheimers.org.nz/explore/research/>: This is our story; A qualitative research report on living with dementia

The person-centred principles of **Engage, Enable, Empower** provide practical ways for care partners, whānau and others to support doing things with and not for someone with dementia.

Supporting someone with dementia to keep engaged and active in the things they enjoy is extremely important. There are lots of small changes that can be made to keep a person with dementia involved.

It involves asking:

- What supports you to remain active and **Engaged** in positive mind and body activities?
- What **Enables** you to maintain your abilities, wellness, and good health?
- What supports, information and services will **Empower** you to be involved in decision-making?

Engage

No matter your age or abilities, engaging in daily exercises for your mind and body can improve fitness, strength, flexibility and balance⁷.

Below are two examples of the group exercise programs available in Aotearoa.

Cognitive Stimulation Therapy (CST) is a brief treatment for people with mild to moderate dementia. The stimulation is provided by engagement in a range of activities and discussions in a group. The aim is to improve cognitive and social functioning⁸. Please visit the [Alzheimers NZ](https://alzheimers.org.nz/explore/dementia-learning-centre/cognitive-stimulation-therapy/about-cst/) website to learn about what is available in your local area.

Community Group Strength and Balance classes are available across Aotearoa and focus on improving lower body, core strength and balance. The groups provide a friendly environment that offers a range of “huff and puff” activities as well as dancing, exercise to music, circuit work, and things like Tai Chi and Zumba. Please visit the [Live stronger](https://www.livestronger.org.nz/home/find-class/strength-balance-reduces-falls/) website to find a group in your area⁹.

For more information and support you can contact your local Alzheimers or Dementia organisation, call 0800 004 001 or visit www.alzheimers.org.nz

⁷ <https://www.dementia.org.au/publications/reports/engage-enable-empower>

⁸ <https://alzheimers.org.nz/explore/dementia-learning-centre/cognitive-stimulation-therapy/about-cst/>

⁹ <https://www.livestronger.org.nz/home/find-class/strength-balance-reduces-falls/>

Enable

Enable is about discovering ways to modify the activity rather than giving it up¹⁰. Breaking an activity down into smaller parts means that even if the person with dementia cannot manage all the steps, they may be able to take part in some of them.

Some examples of Enabling changes are:

- Changing how you do it; Rather than walking alone, joining a neighbour and their dog on a daily walk, using the same path each time.
- Modifying how the task is done; Support the person with dementia to stay involved with cooking by doing the peeling and chopping of vegetables, setting the table, or serving up the meal¹¹.
- Setting up the task; Place the breakfast items on the kitchen bench and use a simple jar opener to assist with breakfast preparation.
- Using simple aids; Encourage reading by following along using a large print book while a talking book playing.
- Making simple environment changes; Placing photos of what is inside the kitchen cupboards on cupboard doors to easily find commonly used items.

Empower

People living with dementia have defined Empowerment as a confidence-building process where they are respected, have a voice and are heard, are involved in making decisions about their lives, and have the opportunity to create change through access to appropriate resources, support and services¹².

Support

The Alzheimers NZ website provides a range of information including Living well with dementia. Your primary healthcare provider can provide advice and referrals to local services available. Some of the other supports and

¹⁰ <https://alzheimers.org.nz/get-support/living-with-dementia/staying-involved-and-active/>

¹¹ <https://alzheimers.org.nz/get-support/living-with-dementia/staying-involved-and-active/>

¹² McConnell, T., Sturm, T., Stevenson, M. et al. Co-producing a shared understanding and definition of empowerment with people with dementia. *Res Involv Engagem* 5, 19 (2019). <https://researchinvolvement.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s40900-019-0154-2>

information available for people living with dementia mate wareware across Aotearoa New Zealand are listed below:

- Local Alzheimers and Dementia organisations provide support, education, information, and related services to members of their communities who are affected by dementia. To access local dementia support, please visit the [Get Support page on the Alzheimers NZ website](#).
- Online support groups are run by the [Dementia Alliance International](#) (DAI). Weekly online peer-to-peer support groups in a number of different time zones are available. Each group has two or three hosts to ensure there is always someone available. Please visit the [website](#).
- The Younger Onset Dementia Aotearoa Trust (YODAT) is an organisation that supports people living with dementia under the age of 65. It offers monthly online meetings for supporters, facilitated by a registered Mental Health Nurse. For more information, contact yodatonlinegroups@gmail.com.

More information

- **Age Concern**
Expertise and knowledge of all available services for older people as well as social activities. There are local offices across Aotearoa New Zealand, a [website](#) or phone 0800 652 105.
- **Carers New Zealand**
Carers NZ exists to support our country's whānau and aiga carers. Visit the [website](#) or phone 0800 777 797.
- **EASIE Living Centre**
EASIE Living Centre is a one-stop online shop for information, advice, and products that promote and enable independent living. To view products, visit the [website](#) or phone 06 353 2743.

This information sheet provides a general summary only of the subject matter covered and is not a substitute for informed professional advice. Any person with dementia or their care partner or whānau should seek professional advice about their individual situation. Alzheimers New Zealand is not liable for any error or omission in this publication, as a result of negligence or otherwise. This information sheet was updated in January 2026.