



August 2021 - #4 Staying connected when apart
Tips for supporting a person with dementia through COVID-19 pandemic.

**Dementia Advisors are available for
advice and support (or a chat) by phone and email**

Contact your local dementia advisor or

Email: admin@dementiawellington.org.nz

Check **Dementia Wellington's Website** and **Facebook**

Website: www.dementiawellington.org.nz

Facebook: www.facebook.com/dementiawellington

Today's issue features staying connected when living apart – especially for those who support a person living in an Aged Care Facility.

We have included responses to questions asked of us by clients and share a positive example of staying connected.

Will he/she still remember me when this is over?

As dementia progresses into the later stage, long term memories gradually start to go. Being physically separated for an extended period may affect a person's ability to recognise friends and family, but it may not. You can support a person's connection with you by recording a voice or video message for staff to play to your friend/family member. Or by providing a photo and short amount of written words for care staff to use to have conversations about you. Here's an example ...

Helen lives in a dementia unit and husband Brian usually visits daily. Due to current restrictions, Brian couldn't visit on Helen's birthday so emailed this special message.

Hi Helen,

Remember this holiday, you were 19, I think. It was a lot of fun-the good old days. On this day we were on Maraetai Beach near Auckland.

I would love to be with you on your birthday but it is not possible because of a virus which is in New Zealand and lots of other countries but it will eventually be less vicious and I will be able to visit you again. In the meantime, we can talk on the phone.

I hope that you have an enjoyable birthday and of course many more!

Lots of love, Brian XXX



The Activities Coordinator told Brian “when Helen saw the picture she glowed, and wanted to tell me all about it” What worked about Brian's message was – it was short, gave enough detail for the Activities Coordinator to prompt conversation, it had a picture, and gave a simple explanation for why Brian couldn't visit. (Thank you to Brian and Helen for sharing this with us)

My friend/family member's dementia is in later stage, he/she can't use a phone or video call – how can I know he/she is ok?

This time does require a huge amount of trust in the home and the care team. Aged Residential Care providers are aware of the challenge of this time for families and encourage people to email or phone in and talk to staff for updates on care and what your friend/family member has been doing. Many homes are doing a weekly newsletter to keep families informed. Seeing photos of, or having a video call where you can see your friend/family member can be very reassuring at this time. You can ask for these if they have not been offered.

Here is an inside perspective from an Aged Residential Care Manager shared with us today -

“If anything now, the homes feel calm and organised. There is a real focus of resident care as we carry on in this lockdown period.”

There may be some benefit for those who are living in Aged Care:

- Less exposure to the community
- Guarantee of regular food and fluids
- Social interaction while others are isolated and alone in the community
- Care and attention at a time when isolation is affecting others
- Reassurance and kindness at a time of worry and anxiety.
- “Care as usual” when the rest of the country has gone on hold.

All Aged Care Facilities are being communicated with daily by the DHB and MOH to provide updates and guidelines. Information on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19, how to keep staff and residents safe, how to access health care support, when to go in to hospital, how to accept new admissions that will not put the rest of the home at risk etc. Below is a link to just one of the Ministry of Health documents guiding Aged Residential Care specifically with care of people with dementia.

https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/covid-19_information_for_visiting_aged_residential_care_facilities_0.docx

If you have any concerns about a person in care, be sure to communicate directly with the facility.

During this time feelings of grief, anxiety or distress may escalate, if you are experiencing any of these you may benefit from talking with a health professional. Below are supports that may be helpful.

- 1. Dementia Wellington** Dementia Advisors are available for phone/video call support. Contact your local dementia advisor
Email: admin@dementiawellington.org.nz
- 2. WellElder** A counselling service for older people, or people caring for/supporting an older person living in the Capital Coast DHB area.
Phone 04 380 2440 – Tuesday to Thursday.
- 3. Te Omanga Hospice Residential Care team** - Ros & Mel are available to provide phone support if you have a family member or loved one in Residential Care who is approaching end of life.
Phone 04 5697921 and ask to be put through to **Ros** or **Mel**.

- 4. COVID-19 mental health support**
To talk with a trained counsellor **Call or text 1737** free, anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

NEED TO TALK?



**free call or text
any time**

The New Zealand Government's website for information regarding COVID-19 [covid19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz)

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