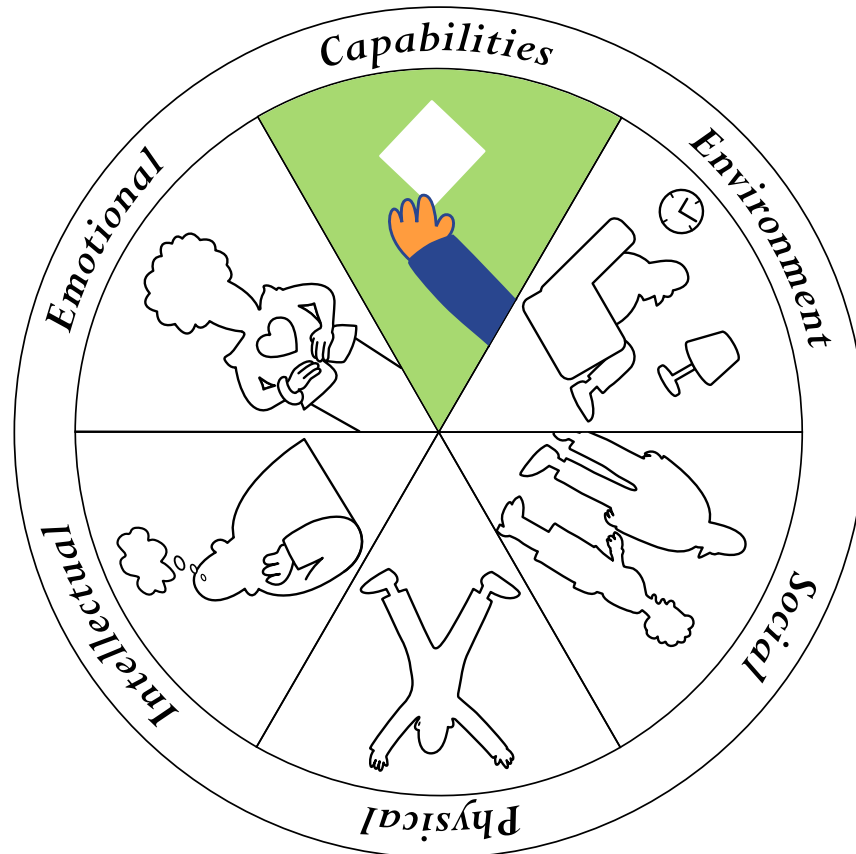


# UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF DEMENTIA ON YOUR CAPABILITIES



The P.I.E.C.E.S.<sup>™</sup> model describes key factors that affect your experience with dementia.

P – physical well-being	Look after your physical health.
I – intellectual well-being	Manage the symptoms of dementia.
E – emotional well-being	Look after your mental health.
<b>C – capabilities</b>	<b>Recognize and use your strengths.</b>
E – environment	Make the most of your environment.
S – social	Record and share your life story.

If you don't have all of the subsections of P.I.E.C.E.S.<sup>™</sup>, you can find them and the rest of “My Guide for Living with Dementia” at [www.dementianetworksc.org/myguide](http://www.dementianetworksc.org/myguide) or at your local Alzheimer Society office.



*This part of  
“My Guide for Living with Dementia”  
is about your capabilities.*

The word capability refers to your unique strengths and abilities. Using your strengths is an important strategy as you manage your dementia over time.

This section includes information about common challenges faced by Persons with dementia. Strategies to address those challenges by using remaining strengths will be suggested.

Fill in the ‘**Getting to Know Me**’ pages so that your Partners in Care will get to know you better. This will become more and more important as you manage your dementia over time.





Your experience with dementia will be influenced by your unique capabilities. Strengths can be identified in all parts of the P.I.E.C.E.S.<sup>TM</sup> model.

Examples of physical strengths:

- the ability to walk 5 flights of stairs
- the ability to push your own wheelchair

Examples of intellectual strengths:

- the ability to read sheet music
- the ability to recognize the names and faces of your grandchildren

Examples of emotional strengths:

- a strong sense of faith
- the ability to find humour in situations

Examples of environmental strengths:

- a home that you have known for many years
- good lighting in your home

Examples of social strengths:

- a supportive family who live nearby
- involvement in social events





You probably have a good idea of what your strengths are. If you don't, your close friends and family - your Partners in Care - probably do!

No-one else will experience dementia exactly like you because no-one else has the exact same strengths. Identifying your unique abilities will help others to help you.

How? Let's take the earlier physical example. Partners in Care, who know that your physical strength is moving your own wheelchair, will plan activities so that you use that strength. They would not frustrate you by planning activities that are beyond your abilities.

Record your current strengths on the following [‘Getting to Know Me’ – My Strengths](#) pages.

**Partners in Care** are people who support you and would benefit from knowing more about you. Partners in Care may include your friends and family, your family doctor or other professionals.

**Dementia** is a general term describing a set of symptoms. These symptoms may include memory loss, language problems, decreased understanding and changes in judgement among others. These symptoms are severe enough to interfere with daily activities.

## ***'Getting To Know Me' - My Strengths (page 1 of 2)***

*Share information with your Partners in Care so that they get to know you better. Each Person has unique strengths and abilities. Identifying your strengths will influence your experience with dementia. Review your strengths every few months.*



CAPABILITIES



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **My Physical Strengths and Abilities:**

Physically, I can: \_\_\_\_\_

My other physical strengths: \_\_\_\_\_

I could use my physical abilities more by: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **My Intellectual Strengths and Abilities:**

I'm pleased that I haven't lost the ability to: \_\_\_\_\_

My other intellectual strengths: \_\_\_\_\_

I could use my mind more by: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **My Emotional Strengths and Abilities:**

I'm managing stress by: \_\_\_\_\_

I am well connected to the following emotional supports: \_\_\_\_\_

My other emotional strengths: \_\_\_\_\_

I could manage stress and my dementia better by: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## **'Getting To Know Me' - My Strengths (page 2 of 2)**

*Share information with your Partners in Care so that they get to know you better. Each Person has unique strengths and abilities. Identifying your strengths will influence your experience with dementia. Review your strengths every few months.*



CAPABILITIES



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **My Environmental Strengths:**

I like my environment because: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Other environmental strengths: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I could change my environment to make it even better by: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **My Social Strengths:**

I am well-connected socially to: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My other social strengths: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I could do more socially and would like to: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



## CHANGES IN ABILITIES

The earliest changes you may notice as a result of dementia are in everyday tasks, like managing money, cooking, using the phone or driving. Your abilities may change but altering an activity may allow you to complete some of the steps independently. Use your remaining strengths and accept help when it is necessary.

Read through each of these tasks and see if any of the possible problems match your experience. Some tips are listed for you to consider.

### Managing Money - possible problems

You may forget to deposit important cheques or pay bills on time. You may find math is more difficult or begin to make errors in your calculations. There is a risk of losing money or falling behind on your financial obligations.



#### *Tips for managing money:*

- Simplify your banking.
  - Set up direct deposit for cheques.
  - Set up direct withdrawal for usual bills.
  - Consider joint accounts with someone you trust.
- Work with a trusted Partner in Care .
  - This person can double check calculations or monitor account balances.
  - Consider having a Continuing Power of Attorney for Property. This allows someone you trust to act on your behalf.
- Identify the steps in managing money that are a problem and consider alternatives.
  - If balancing your cheque book is the problem:
    - Write down all of your purchases and deposits at the time they are made.
    - Ask a person you trust to review your information with you.



## CHANGES IN ABILITIES

### Using the Phone – possible problems

You may not remember the phone numbers of important people or be able to call for emergency help. You may mix up the steps of using a phone. There is a risk of not being able to get emergency help when you aren't using the phone correctly.



#### *Tips for using the phone:*

- Keep a list of important phone numbers by each phone. Use large print.
  - Consider using pictures of the person as well as their name beside the number.
  - Make sure that Emergency 911 is on your list.
- Keep the same style of phone. Don't replace your old phone with something that looks very different.
- Consider an alert system so that help is only the push of a button away. Your local Alzheimer Society can help you to locate services in your area.
- Identify the steps in using the phone that are difficult for you and consider alternatives.
  - If you are having trouble with dialing, have other people call you at predetermined times.
  - If retrieving messages from your answering machine is difficult, have a Partner in Care write out the steps of this task.
  - If you have trouble looking up phone numbers and you are over age 65, call Bell Telephone and request free 411 information service.





## CHANGES IN ABILITIES

### Storing, Preparing and Cooking Food – possible problems

You may find it hard to make a full meal. You may burn food and pots more often. You may store food in the wrong place such as milk in the cupboard or fresh fruit in the freezer. There is a risk to your health from eating food which isn't well-cooked or hasn't been safely stored.



#### *Tips for the safe preparation of food:*

- Mark a time on your calendar once a week to clear out old food from your fridge and cupboards. Do this task at a set time, for example, immediately after church, or after the morning news on Friday. A Partner in Care could help you with this task. Ask them to look for any food that may have spoiled or is stored inappropriately.
- Consider having a Home Safety check completed. This can be arranged through the Community Care Access Centre. Strategies and products that are specific to your current needs will be provided including options for meal delivery.
- Identify the steps in preparing food that are a problem for you and consider alternatives.
  - If preparing food is difficult, buy pre-chopped vegetables and fruit as well as single serving meats.
  - If you are easily distracted when you are cooking:
    - Turn off the radio and television.
    - Cook simple meals.
    - Use the microwave instead of the stove or oven.
    - If you are familiar with using a microwave, use it instead of the stove.



## CHANGES IN ABILITIES

### Shopping – possible problems

You may have trouble remembering to buy all the groceries that you need. Shopping in large grocery and department stores may become overwhelming and stressful. There is a risk of not finding what you need or forgetting to pay.



#### *Tips for shopping:*

- Make a list of everything you need to buy. Keep the list in an obvious place such as on the fridge or in your purse.
- Ask a friend or neighbour to shop with you.
- Identify the stressful parts of this task and consider alternatives.
  - If the store is too big and overwhelming, choose small, local stores and shop at less busy times of the day. You could also try a grocery delivery service on the internet or by phone.

### Household Chores – possible problems

Managing many household tasks may become overwhelming. Yard-work, laundry, home maintenance, vacuuming, dusting and other tasks can be physically and mentally draining. You may also miss signs of needed repair and this can lead to an unsafe environment.



#### *Tips for maintaining your household:*

- Consider having a Home Safety check. This can be arranged through the Community Care Access Centre.
- Identify the tasks that are a problem for you and consider alternatives.
  - If yardwork is difficult, look into local volunteer or paid help.
  - If laundry is difficult, ask a Partner in Care to help out on occasion.



## CHANGES IN ABILITIES

### Driving and Getting Around Safely – possible problems

Your ability to react quickly in potentially dangerous situations may be decreased. You may get lost more frequently, have minor car accidents or you may hear that family and friends don't want to ride with you. There is a great safety risk to you and others associated with a decline in your ability to drive.



#### *Driving tips:*

- Talk to your doctor, friends and family. Although you may want to continue driving, it is important to plan alternatives.
  - Make plans to get rides for shopping, appointments and socializing.
  - Investigate public transportation, “frequent-rider” rates on taxis or volunteer driving services in your community.
  - Contact your local Alzheimer Society about the “Safely Home” program. This program provides an identification bracelet should you become lost.
- If your doctor has concerns about your driving and has reported this to the Ministry of Transportation, you may receive a letter suspending your license. You will have to pass a driving test to reinstate your license. Consider the above tips until you have investigated the reinstatement of your license.



## CHANGES IN ABILITIES

### Managing Medications – possible problems

You may not always remember when you have taken your medications. This can lead to doubling up on medications or skipping doses. There is a risk to your physical health if medications are taken incorrectly. Your symptoms of dementia may appear worse when medications are mixed up or stopped suddenly.



#### *Tips for managing medications:*

- Keep all of your medications in one place.
- Write out a full list of your medications and when they are to be taken. You may use the following [‘Getting to Know Me’ - My Medications](#) page for this purpose. This page also appears in the Physical subsection. You may already have completed it. Your pharmacist, an important Partner in Care, can also help you with this.
- Identify the steps in taking medications that are a problem and consider alternatives.
  - If you are forgetting to take medications regularly, talk to your pharmacist about a dosette or blister pack system. This means that your medication is pre-measured and labelled for each day.
  - If you aren’t refilling your prescriptions on time, write it on your calendar as a reminder. Consider an alert system that can offer a medication cuing option. Your local Alzheimer Society can help you to locate services in your area.

## 'Getting To Know Me' - My Medications

Keep this medication list updated and take it with you to your doctors' appointments. Between visits, keep this list where your Partners can find it. To assist you with this chart, ask your pharmacist for a current list of your prescribed medications. Add over-the-counter medications or other non-prescription treatments to this chart.



PHYSICAL

CAPABILITIES



Date Started & Stopped					
When Taken					
Dosage & Frequency					
Reason for Use					
Medications & Treatments					



## Making Decisions

In Ontario, each Person is presumed to be able to make his or her own decisions. We either benefit from or suffer the consequences of each of our decisions.

There are many types of decisions that you have been making. For example, you decide how to use your money, what medical treatments to accept or refuse, and where you want to live. If you become unable to make these important decisions, there is a legal process in place to have a decision made on your behalf.

Legislation allows you to assign a trusted representative to make a decision for you. Each time a decision is needed, your ability to make it needs to be evaluated before your representative can make the decision on your behalf. Therefore, assigning someone to make decisions does not mean that person will make all of your future decisions. You may want to get advice from a lawyer about assigning a decision maker.

If you choose not to assign someone to make decisions, your Partners in Care will still follow legal steps to find the correct decision maker for you. However, planning ahead allows you to choose who you feel is best suited to this important job.



### *Tips for decision making:*

- Talk to your family and friends about your wishes for your care in the future, sometimes referred to as Advanced Directives.
- Investigate Powers of Attorney. Talking to a lawyer will be very helpful.
  - Consider completing a Power of Attorney for Personal Care. This allows someone you trust to help you with health and other personal care decisions.
  - Consider who you trust to look after your financial affairs. A Continuing Power of Attorney for Property allows them to act on your behalf.
  - More information is located in the Resources Section of “My Guide for Living with Dementia”.



## General Tips:

- Use this Guide to keep track of any changes in your abilities and how you manage them. If writing is difficult, ask a Partner in Care to write for you. The important thing is that other people understand your experience.
- Create your own memory book by adding paper or a notebook to this Guide.
- Keep a calendar and pen by the phone for recording appointments.
  - Ask a Partner in Care to go with you on medical appointments. Another set of ears can be very helpful to you.
  - Maintain older equipment or buy similar items so that you don't have to learn how to use new equipment or appliances.
  - For any activity that is difficult:
    - What steps are not going well?
    - Is there another way to do that step?
      - If yes, change how the activity is completed.
      - If no, can you stop that activity entirely? What would happen?





## Maintaining Balance

Everyone has a limit to the amount of stress they can manage. Life is in balance when the demands placed on us are equal to our abilities and strengths.



Stresses, which can cause an imbalance, can come from any part of P.I.E.C.E.S.<sup>TM</sup>

- Physical – fatigue, flu, new medication...
- Intellectual – loss of memory, difficulty concentrating...
- Emotional – worrying about family, embarrassment...
- Capabilities – tasks that are too complicated or are unfamiliar...
- Environmental – lots of noise, a new home...
- Social – loss of a friend or spouse, pressure to host social events...

When we reach our limit because too many stresses have caused an imbalance, we become frustrated and have to release pressure.

- Some people ‘blow up’, get angry, yell or slam doors.
- Some people withdraw, get away from everyone, give people the ‘silent treatment’.



Which of the following statements describes you best right now?

- I get stressed more easily.  
OR
- I feel less stressed right now... it takes a lot of pressure to tip the scale.  
OR
- I haven't noticed any change in my ability to manage stress.

Ask your family and friends if they have noticed any change in your ability to manage stress.



### *Tips for maintaining balance:*

- Simplify your life.
- Focus on the activities that are most important to you.
- Change or stop the activities that are stressful.
- Share how you are feeling.
  - Write it down. Ask your Partners in Care to read it.
  - Talk about your feelings with your Partners in Care. Contact your local Alzheimer Society for information on counseling and support groups.
- Take control. Learn about dementia and use other sections of this Guide.





## SUMMARY

There are many possible changes that you may experience with dementia. Whatever challenges you encounter, it is important to keep your strengths in mind and use them as much as possible. Many skills learned throughout your life will be maintained and these are remaining strengths.



### *Some final tips for maintaining your capabilities!*

- Focus on your abilities and use them. Don't stop activities...change how you do them. For example:
  - Use automatic deposits and withdrawals.
  - Take taxis or public transportation.
  - Consider simpler recipes for entertaining.
- Make a list of tasks that friends can do with you or for you.

'Getting to Know Me' - Maintaining My Capabilities pages can be used every few months to monitor your everyday tasks. Fill them in with your Partners in Care. They may see symptoms or changes that you have not noticed.

This part of "My Guide for Living with Dementia" was about **your capabilities**. The information was general and may not have described your particular situation or answered your particular questions. Write down your questions here and consider contacting your local Alzheimer Society office to discuss them further.

---



---



---

You have now completed **'capabilities'**. The next subsection is about the effect of the environment.

If you don't have all of the subsections of P.I.E.C.E.S.<sup>TM</sup>, you can find them and the rest of "My Guide for Living with Dementia" (including a Resource Section) at [www.dementianetworksc.org/myguide](http://www.dementianetworksc.org/myguide) or at your local Alzheimer Society office.

## 'Getting To Know Me' - Maintaining My Capabilities (page 1 of 4)

Share information with your Partners in Care so that they get to know you better.

Review this page every few months.

CAPABILITIES



C

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Managing Money** (Description on page 6)

Managing money is difficult for me.  Yes  No

The part of managing money that is difficult is: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I could do this differently by: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Using the Phone** (Description on page 7)

I am having trouble using the phone because: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

As an alternative, I could: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Storing, Preparing and Cooking Food** (Description on page 8)

I am having trouble preparing food because: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I could do this differently by: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## 'Getting To Know Me' - Maintaining My Capabilities (page 2 of 4)

CAPABILITIES

Share information with your Partners in Care so that they get to know you better.

Review this page every few months.



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Shopping** (Description on page 9)

Shopping has become more difficult because: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

As an alternative, I could: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Household Chores** (Description on page 9)

I am having trouble with the following household chores: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

To make chores easier, I could: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Driving and Getting Around Safely** (Description on page 10)

Driving has become more difficult because: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

My friends and family are concerned about my driving.  Yes  No

They say: \_\_\_\_\_

As an alternative to driving myself, I could: \_\_\_\_\_

## 'Getting To Know Me' - Maintaining My Capabilities (page 3 of 4)

CAPABILITIES

Share information with your Partners in Care so that they get to know you better.  
Review this page every few months.



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Managing Medications (Description on page 11)

Managing medications is difficult for me.     Yes     No

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

The part of managing medications that is difficult is: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Making Decisions (Description on page 13)

I am concerned about the decisions I have been making.     Yes     No

A decision that I am having trouble with is: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I have concerns about other people making decisions for me because: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

To discuss this further, I will contact: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

## 'Getting To Know Me' - Maintaining My Capabilities (page 4 of 4)

Share information with your Partners in Care so that they get to know you better.

Review this page every few months.

CAPABILITIES



C

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Other Activities

Other activities that I am having trouble with are: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Something that I could do differently is: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### Maintaining Balance (Description on page 15)

At this point in time:

- I get stressed very easily
- I feel less stressed right now
- I haven't noticed any change in my stress level

To discuss this further, I will contact: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

This is how I'm feeling: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_