

# Helping a loved one with dementia enjoy Valentine's day

February 13 2024, by Carole Tanzer Miller

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When a loved one has dementia, Valentine's Day can be bittersweet.

"When [dementia](#) enters someone's life, it can change many things,

including the dynamic of their relationships," said Jennifer Reeder, director of educational and [social services](#) for the Alzheimer's Foundation of America.

That's why it's important to be adaptable, she suggested in a foundation news release. Being open to change can help families affected by dementia find alternative ways to express love, show support and connect with one another not only on Valentine's Day but also throughout the year, Reeder said.

For a dementia-friendly Valentine's Day, use the acronym L.O.V.E.:

**Look Back Together:** Take out old photos and enjoy them together. Describe who the people are and what's going on in each picture. Talking about shared moments or occasions you enjoyed together celebrates the love and bond you share.

**Open Yourself to Connecting in Different Ways:** It may be hard to do things the way you used to, but there are many ways to maintain or re-create love and connection. Consider sharing a meal, watching a favorite movie, listening to favorite music or just talking a walk together. A [gentle touch](#), smile and eye contact strengthen connections with someone who is unable to express their emotions in words. Buy a bouquet and enjoy its beauty together. The [scent](#) can boost mood and stimulate the brain. (Choose flowers such as roses, orchids or sunflowers, which are non-toxic to people and pets.)

**Verbalize Your Feelings:** Write a Valentine and read it aloud to your loved one. Even if they can't grasp the full meaning, writing it and communicating your love can lift your own spirits.

**Express Yourself in the Person's Love Language:** Words of affirmation, quality time, physical touch, gifts and acts of service are

love languages people use to express love. Speak to your loved one in that language, and remember that these gestures may change as dementia progresses.

**More information:** The Alzheimer's Foundation of America has a helpline staffed by social workers trained in dementia care. It's available seven days a week by phone (866-232-8484); text (646-586-5283) and chat ([alzfdn.org/](https://alzfdn.org/)).

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