

# Project Tender Loving Care Community + Best Friends Approach

---

## **Project Tender Loving Care Community (TLC Community) Goals:**

Inform and Empower Dementia Caregivers through Classes, Workshops, etc. Help Caregivers & Care Receivers connect with available resources. Suggest existing and/or develop new programs & resources to serve unmet needs of Dementia Caregivers & Care Receivers in our local community.

C Rae Hozer dedicated email = [Rae.TLCC14@gmail.com](mailto:Rae.TLCC14@gmail.com)

***Before you speak or interact with a dementia care receiver ask yourself, “If my best friend said or did that to me would I want to stay friends with him/her?” If the answer is “No” stop, step back and rethink your approach. You’re in this for the long haul and the Relationship is Everything.***

After my Mother, Janet Hozer was diagnosed with Dementia in 2007 my daughter-in-law, Ruth Cunningham shared her experiences helping her mother who also had Alzheimer’s Disease. And she gave me a book on family caregiving that advocated the best approach was to be a best friend. (See highlights below.)

## **BEST FRIENDS APPROACH TO DEMENTIA/ALZHEIMER’S CARE**

Source: “A Dignified Life, The Best Friends Approach to Alzheimer’s Care, A Guide for Family Caregivers” by Virginia Bell, MSW & David Troxel, MPH

- Friendship is multicultural. Everyone has the potential to be a friend and have a friend. This is one reason to be a best friend to a person with dementia.
- A person with dementia mixes up relationships. Wife becomes “mother” and daughter becomes “wife”. This relationship-confusion is another reason to recast old relationships and become best friends.
- Family relationships may be loaded with intense emotions, but friendships can evoke social graces that bring out the best in people.
- A person with dementia faces many losses and a growing sense of isolation, what they need is a good friend – a Best Friend.

## **WHAT IS A BEST FRIEND?**

### **FRIENDS KNOW EACH OTHER’S PERSONALITY AND HISTORY**

A best friend becomes the person’s memory.

A best friend is sensitive to the person’s traditions.

A best friend respects the person’s personality, moods, and problem-solving style.

### **FRIENDS DO THINGS TOGETHER**

A best friend enjoys activities with the person that has dementia.

A best friend involves the person in activities and chores.

A best friend initiates activities.

A best friend ties activities to the person’s past skills and interests.

# Project Tender Loving Care Community + Best Friends Approach

---

## FRIENDS DO THINGS TOGETHER (continued)

- A best friend encourages the person to enjoy the simple things in life.
- A best friend remembers to celebrate special occasions.

## FRIENDS COMMUNICATE

- A best friend listens skillfully.
- A best friend fills in the blanks.
- A best friend asks questions that are easily answered.
- A best friend recognizes the importance of non-verbal communication.
- A best friend gently encourages participation in conversations.

## FRIENDS BUILD SELF-ESTEEM

- A best friend gives compliments often.
- A best friend carefully asks for advice or opinions.
- A best friend always offers encouragement.
- A best friend offers congratulations.

## FRIENDS LAUGH TOGETHER OFTEN

- A best friend tells jokes and funny stories.
- A best friend takes advantage of spontaneous fun.
- A best friend uses self-deprecating humor often.

## FRIENDS ARE EQUALS

- A best friend does not talk down to the person.
- A best friend works to help the person “save face”.
- A best friend does not assume a supervisory role.
- A best friend recognizes that learning is a two-way street.

## FRIENDS WORK AT THE RELATIONSHIP

- A best friend is not overly sensitive.
- A best friend does more than half the work.
- A best friend builds a trusting relationship.
- A best friend shows affection often.

## **The knack of Caregiving**

- |   |                                    |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Be well-informed  | Have empathy                       |
| Respect the basic rights of the person                                  | Maintain optimism                  |
| Employ finesse  | Use common sense                   |
| Communicate skillfully  | Use music                          |
| Set realistic expectations  | Use humor                          |
| Be spontaneous  | Maintain patience                  |
| Be flexible   | Stay focused                       |
| Be non-judgmental   | Value the moment                   |
| Maintain self-confidence  | Take cues from person’s life story |
| Connect with the spiritual  | Plan ahead                         |
| Know it is sometimes easier to ask forgiveness than to get permission   |                                    |
| <i>Take care of yourself (Know “caregiver” does not equal “martyr”)</i> |                                    |