

Words Matter:

LANGUAGE OF LONGEVITY DISCUSSION GUIDE



Purpose: To support dignity, belonging, and a positive aging experience.

WHY LANGUAGE MATTERS

Words can make people feel respected or disrespected. We use language to help people feel valued, safe, and included. Both staff and residents deserve dignity and a sense of belonging.

COMMUNITY VS. FACILITY

Residents live in a home or community, not a facility. A facility stores things - we don't store people. We support quality of life, and the word "facility" diminishes the experience for staff and residents.

CREATE BELONGING

We welcome everyone to feel part of the community. Shared language strengthens belonging. Example: If someone feels disrespected because of words or tone, it devalues inclusion.

UPHOLD DIGNITY & RESPECT

Every person has value and deserves respect. Speaking in a respectful way protects dignity. Example: Speaking to an older adult in a childish tone can strip away dignity. This is called elderspeak.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE

Avoid	Use Instead
Facility	Community or Home
Elderly	Older Adult, Resident, Participant, or Senior
Sweetie, Honey, or Dear*	Participant's Preferred Name
Unit, Room, or Bed	Home, Apartment, Residence, Suite
Assisted Living or Skilled Nursing Facility	Community, Home, or Center
Staff or Employee	Team Member

TEAM ACTIVITY:

Ask a resident what they prefer to be called. How does their choice uphold their dignity?

Discussion Questions:

- 1) How does calling your workplace a facility make you feel about the work you do?
- 2) How can we shift our language away from "facility" and "elderly"?
- 3) What does the word "sweetie" communicate to you? Does tone affect it?*
- 4) What ways can we support our teammates in shifting language?

*Learn more at WatchWhatYouSay.org

