

# 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, Participant, or Senior
Sweetie, Honey, or Dear*	Participant's Preferred Name
Unit or Bed	Home, Apartment, Residence, Suite
Assisted Living or Skilled Nursing Facility	Community, Home, or Center

## 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?