



## DAWN Dementia Care Specialist Handbook



The DAWN Method believes in preserving dignity and autonomy through aging in place.

We do this by training families and caregivers to meet the emotional needs and rational thought losses caused by dementia.

The DAWN Method is a simple set of tools for those caring for people with dementia.



## Welcome to the DAWN Method!

We are very glad to have you join us. You will be using an online training program to become certified in an amazingly effective approach to dementia care: the DAWN Method®.

This program is designed to teach caregivers how to recognize the skills that remain when someone is experiencing dementia. If we understand the skills people continue to use, as well as those that are fading or gone, we can provide kinder and more effective care with far less stress to ourselves and our clients.

This training consists of 36 short videos of about 10 to 20 minutes in length, each followed by a quiz. Those of you who are caregivers are required to watch the videos and complete the quiz after each video. You will be able to watch the videos and take the quizzes as many times as you want. Once you've completed all 36 quizzes, you'll be a certified DAWN Dementia Care Specialist (DDCS)—a certification that is good for two years.

So welcome to the DAWN team. We are so glad to share with you how to recognize the skills that dementia does not take away. You will soon be experiencing less stress in your work and be helping your clients feel safer while they enjoy more of a sense of wellbeing every day.

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## What is the DAWN Method?

The DAWN Method was created by Judy Cornish, an elder law attorney who left her practice to work with people who were experiencing dementia—and then shared what she learned. She has since published two books (the *Dementia Handbook* and *Dementia With Dignity*), founded the Dementia & Alzheimer’s Wellbeing Network® (DAWN), and created a training program for families as well as this certification program for professional caregivers.

It all began in 2010, when Judy was helping a neighbor who had been diagnosed with Alzheimer’s Disease. She saw a pattern in the cognitive skills her neighbor kept and those that faded away, was intrigued by her discovery, and started a dementia care business so she could see whether the pattern held true. It did. Judy spent the next five years working with people from all walks of life who were experiencing various forms of dementia, most of whom were still living at home.

Judy soon realized that the approach she developed to support the strengths and losses in dementia would allow people to live safely at home for longer, but it would also help families and professional caregivers provide care more kindly and with less stress to themselves.

When we understand which skills people are still using, we can work with those abilities. And when we understand what they are no longer able to comprehend, or do, we understand why they so often react with embarrassment, frustration, fear, and resistance—and we can then stop putting them in those situations.

The approach that Judy’s learned from her clients is now called the DAWN Method, and it’s the first truly strength-based approach to providing dementia care.

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## Your New Role

As a practitioner of the DAWN Method, your first priority and primary task will be to help your clients live lives of dignity and autonomy through developing a clearer understanding of the skills that remain when someone is experiencing dementia. You will be learning how to be a better companion and helper of someone who's experiencing dementia, for in the words of the American philosopher Ram Dass, we're really all just fellow travelers—walking each other home on this journey called life.

As you watch these videos, you'll find yourself becoming more aware of your own cognitive skills, not just theirs, and you'll develop an understanding of which cognitive skills you're using as you perform the various tasks that shape your daily life. Plan to complete no more than one video and quiz in a day—you'll enjoy the process more and learn more as well.

As you learn the pattern of skills kept and lost when someone is experiencing dementia, you will become better at not asking your clients to do things they can no longer do, so they'll be more amenable and comfortable when with you. They'll feel safer and you'll be less stressed. It's really that simple.

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## Your DAWN Training

In short, the DAWN Method is a set of seven tools with techniques designed to meet the emotional needs we have when we're experiencing the progressive cognitive impairment that dementia causes.

The way we behave is a reflection of how we feel. This does not change when we begin to experience dementia. What are commonly referred to as "dementia-related behaviors" are not actually symptoms of dementia. They are actually symptoms of the emotional needs we have when we try to navigate the world and interact with others without the skills we've always relied on.

The DAWN Method training program is comprised of 36 videos divided into eight lessons. The first lesson introduces you to dementia as a condition and helps you understand why people who are experiencing it become unable to live in reality. The next seven lessons teach you how to recognize each of the seven emotional needs caused by dementia, and give you tools and techniques for working comfortably with someone who lacks the cognitive skills you have.

You should plan to complete no more than one video and quiz in a day, because this program is designed to teach you experientially, rather than through memorization or analysis. You will need to give yourself time to absorb the concepts, and plan to repeat the quizzes sometimes several times to achieve mastery. Each lesson contains from three to seven videos. The first lesson will be the hardest for you to master—and it has the most videos. But rest assured, you'll find it easier as you go along, as your understanding grows and your new skills become habitual.

If you haven't taken a training course in some time, or if you weren't a star student during your school years, don't worry. This training course is designed for all of us. You will find that Judy first presents an idea, then revisits it in following videos until you develop familiarity through having time to reflect and see the concept portrayed in different situations over several weeks.

So, to recap, the symptoms of dementia are unmet emotional needs, and this training program will help you understand how to recognize which emotional need is prompting a behavior so your reactions will help your clients feel safe and comfortable (and cooperative), despite dementia.

The emotional needs caused by dementia—and the corresponding DAWN tools—are outlined on the following two pages.

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# The DAWN Method Training Program

## Lesson 1 – Dementia Care Introduction

- ✦ When we begin to experience dementia, we lose skills for rational thinking, memory and attention, but we do not lose our intuitive thinking skills or ability to experience the present.
- ✦ The result of losing our rational thinking and memory skills is loss of the ability to perceive reality accurately, which changes every aspect of our lives.
- ✦ DAWN caregivers learn how to work with their clients' inability to perceive reality, how to recognize the skills their clients can still use, and how to stop frustrating and embarrassing them by expecting them to do what they cannot do.

## The DAWN Security Tools:

### Lesson 2 – Mood Management

- ✦ We manage our own moods with memory and rational thought. When people experience dementia, they lose those skills and so lose the ability to manage their own moods.
- ✦ DAWN caregivers understand that we are always creating the mood when we are with our clients, and we learn how to consciously create and maintain good moods.

### Lesson 3 – Security in Confusion

- ✦ People experiencing dementia are forced to live with increasing confusion as their memory and rational thinking skills fade. They learn from their companions whether they are safe being confused (forgetful and unable to perform tasks).
- ✦ DAWN caregivers learn to help their clients develop a sense of safety as their confusion increases and their skills fade.

### Lesson 4 – Security in Care

- ✦ People experiencing dementia are also becoming ever less able to care for themselves – again resulting in growing insecurity.
- ✦ DAWN clients learn from their caregivers that they are safe even though they are needy; they learn that we are their partners, not their instructors, in living life to the fullest.

## The DAWN Wellbeing Tools:

### Lesson 5 – Social Success

- ✦ Everyone needs to feel successful in conversations and in their interactions with others; dementia makes that increasingly difficult.
- ✦ DAWN training teaches caregivers how to help their clients succeed in conversations and avoid embarrassment in one-on-one and group situations.

### Lesson 6 – Sense of Control

- ✦ No one can feel happy or content for long when they are unable to make decisions or exercise choice due to loss of memory and rational thinking skills.
- ✦ DAWN caregivers learn how to augment their clients' ability to make decisions, and help them feel more in control of their bodies and their lives.

### Lesson 7 – Sense of Value

- ✦ We all need to feel valued and respected by our loved ones and companions, and we all need to feel that we have something of value to share in our relationships.
- ✦ The DAWN method provides techniques and tools for helping our clients maintain a sense of dignity and value.

### Lesson 8 - Secure Future

- ✦ No one can feel happy for long if they do not feel secure about the future, and yet dementia takes away the ability to envision or plan; a sense of dread will pervade unless their companions know how to help.
- ✦ DAWN caregivers learn how to recognize their clients' personal security symbols, and how to provide the appropriate amount of care to meet their needs as dementia progresses.

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## Your Resources

Here are a few tips to enhance your experience:

- ✦ Make sure that you're using the most current version of your browser. We recommend Chrome and Firefox as the most reliable browsers for watching our videos.
- ✦ If you're using an Apple computer, we recommend downloading Chrome or Firefox instead of using Safari; some versions of Safari do not play Vimeo videos properly.
- ✦ You may find there is a delay between the end of the video and the loading of the quiz, depending on the browser and server that you are using; be patient.
- ✦ You can speed up the videos to listen to them at the speed that matches your natural thinking and learning rate. Judy recorded them at a sedate speed so that everyone, regardless of age or ability, would be able to comfortably process the information.
- ✦ You will find that you can select or deselect answers by clicking anywhere on an answer (some browsers portray the selection boxes as extremely small).
- ✦ You will find that you have more difficulty completing the quizzes of Lesson 1 than those of the subsequent lessons. This is because you will be developing and becoming more aware of your own intuitive learning skills as you proceed.
- ✦ You may notice that toward the end of the program there are a few quiz questions that are not directly answered by the video. That was intentional. The DAWN Method teaches us to be more aware of all our cognitive skills, including our rational thinking skills. These questions require you to use your rational thinking skills instead of your intuitive or memory skills.
- ✦ If you have display or play problems that continue after you have updated your browser, go into your computer's system and internet connection and search for "cookies" and delete your cookies.

If you still have problems, write to us at [info@thedawnmethod.com](mailto:info@thedawnmethod.com) or contact your Group Leader.

If you have questions regarding content, please write to Judy at [judy@thedawnmethod.com](mailto:judy@thedawnmethod.com). If you'd like to learn more about using the DAWN Method, the following resources are available to you:

- ✦ [The Dementia Handbook](#), by Judy Cornish
- ✦ [Dementia With Dignity](#), by Judy Cornish
- ✦ Blog [articles](#) that you can search by topic on the DAWN website.