



Misconceptions and Stigma

In many of our communities, dementia is still a mystery. It's misnamed. It's misunderstood. And, too often, it's feared. When an elder begins to act differently - forgetting the names of their grandchildren, wandering away from home, or becoming unusually quiet or agitated - people don't always think of a medical condition. They whisper.

They say:

- “She’s been bewitched.”
- “He’s under a curse.”
- “It’s punishment for something they did.”

In some places, people with dementia have been **hidden away**, locked indoors, or **mistreated** - not because their families don’t care, but because they’re afraid, or ashamed, or simply don’t know what else to do.

And that’s what makes stigma so cruel. It isolates not just the person living with dementia - but the **entire family**.

Imagine being a daughter, watching your mother slowly forget who you are. And instead of receiving understanding or guidance, you’re met with suspicion. You’re told it’s spiritual. You’re told to pray harder. Or worse, to keep it quiet.

But **dementia is not witchcraft**.

It’s not a curse.

It’s not madness.

It’s a medical condition.

Just as **diabetes affects the blood** and **asthma affects the lungs**, **dementia affects the brain**. The brain starts to lose its ability to remember, to reason, to process emotions, and to manage daily activities.

The person you love is still there, behind the forgetfulness, the confusion, or the changes in behavior. **They are not lost. They are living with dementia. And they need support, not shame.**

When we don’t understand what’s happening, **fear fills the silence**. And fear gives way to silence, judgment, and harm. But when we **talk about dementia**, when we give it a name, when we explain it with kindness, **we replace fear with compassion**.

We start to say:

☞ “She’s not crazy. She has dementia.”

☐ “How can I help?” instead of “What did she do wrong?”

♥ “He deserves care and dignity, not blame and isolation.”

At **DementiaAware Kenya**, we believe in opening the door to these conversations - at the church, in the chief’s baraza, in the market, and at home. Because when families understand, they feel less alone. When communities learn, they judge less. And when we replace stigma with support, we protect our elders—from shame, from silence, and from harm.



Let’s change the story.

Let’s talk about dementia.

Because the more we understand, the kinder we become.