



# Entertainment and Connection: Watching Together When Dementia Enters the Room

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**A**s we age, we notice the shape of memory changing. Names may disappear in the moment, events get jumbled, and attention flickers. But for many families, the changes go deeper.

Dementia is becoming a shared experience in our homes and our Village. Whether it is a spouse, a parent, a sibling, or even ourselves many of us are witnessing its presence.

Dementia is not a single disease but a general term for a decline in mental ability that is severe enough to interfere with daily life. Memory loss is a hallmark, but dementia also includes problems with language, judgment, attention, and reasoning. Alzheimer's disease is the most common cause of dementia, accounting for 60–80% of cases. Other types include vascular dementia, Lewy body dementia, and frontotemporal dementia.

While Alzheimer's is progressive and degenerative, some forms of dementia may be more stable or caused by treatable conditions. What unites them is the impact on how a person processes the world—and how that changes relationships and routines.

### Common signs include:

- Repeating questions or stories
- Getting lost in familiar places
- Difficulty with words or following conversations
- Changes in personality or mood
- Withdrawal from activities once enjoyed

For caregivers and family members, the emotional toll can be high. Frustration, fatigue, and sadness are common companions. But small moments of connection can make a world of difference. One simple, powerful tool? Shared entertainment.

### Why Movies and TV?

Visual storytelling has the ability to soothe, stimulate, and reconnect. For those with dementia, certain kinds of movies and TV shows can:

- Provide comfort through familiarity
- Stimulate long-term memories (which often remain intact longer)
- Reduce anxiety
- Offer caregivers a shared activity and brief respite

### What Makes a Show or Movie Dementia-Friendly?

- Familiar: Classics from the 1940s to the 1970s often resonate
- Simple plots: Avoiding confusing timelines or too many characters
- Gentle pacing: Not too loud or fast-moving
- Positive tone: Uplifting or emotionally warm stories
- Visually engaging: Music, color, and imagery are often easier to follow than dialogue

### Recommended Movies

- The Sound of Music (1965) — Memorable songs and emotional clarity
- Singing in the Rain (1952) — Classic joy and humor
- Cocoon (1985) — A story of aging and wonder
- Paddington (2014) — Wholesome, kind, and visually engaging
- Babe (1995) — Simple story, heartwarming tone

### Recommended TV Shows

- The Andy Griffith Show — Familiar, moral, and slow-paced
- I Love Lucy — Timeless humor, easy to follow
- The Golden Girls — Humor and heart, focused on friendship
- Planet Earth (BBC) — Stunning visuals, soothing narration
- Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood — Gentle tone, emotional clarity

### Other Forms of Engagement

- Music programs or sing-alongs from familiar eras
- Photo albums or "memory boxes" with tactile items
- Nature documentaries with minimal narration
- Short-form programs like old variety shows

### For the Caregiver

Entertainment can offer more than a distraction. It can open a door to shared joy, trigger an old memory, or simply give you both a chance to sit quietly, together. A good film won't cure dementia, but it might remind you — and your loved one — of who you are to each other.

We in the Village are not alone in this journey. By learning, sharing, and gently laughing together, we find the grace to keep going.