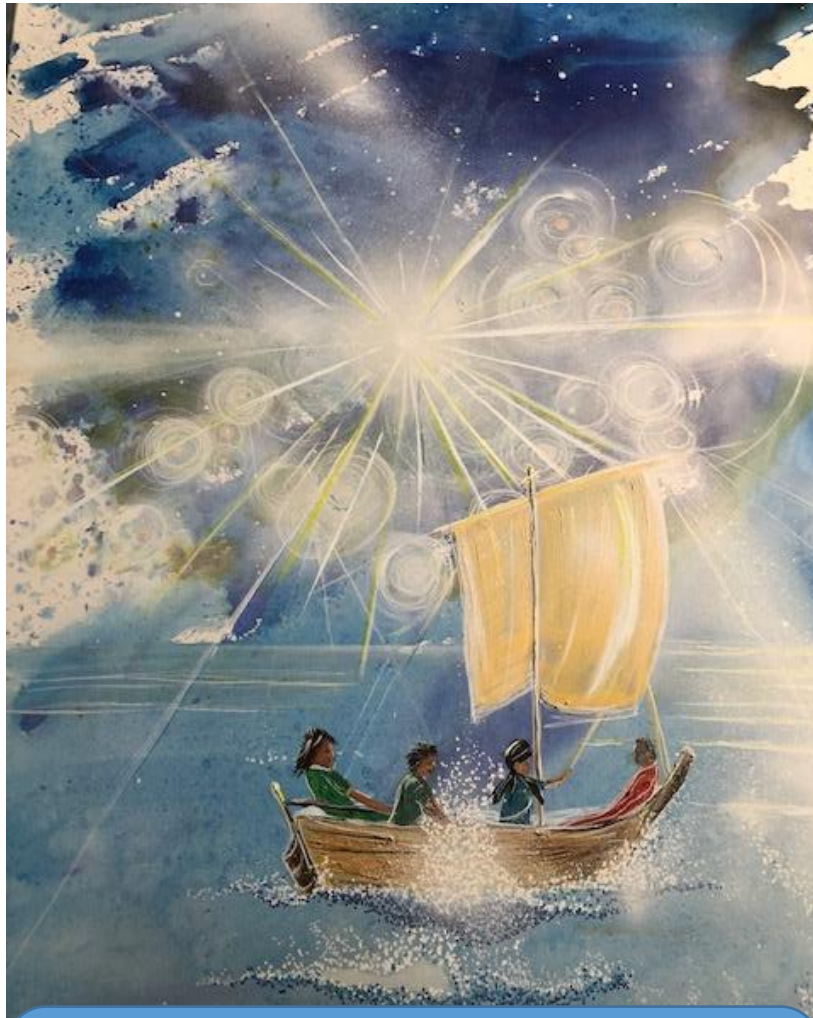


If you are living with dementia, this booklet is for you.
It's also for you if you are staying in step with someone who is living with dementia, perhaps as a family member or friend, perhaps as a carer.



Strength and Comfort through Dementia

Image by Chris Duffett <https://chrisduffettart.com/>

Who's in the boat with you?
How stormy or calm is the water?
What helps you keep afloat?
How do you help others keep afloat?

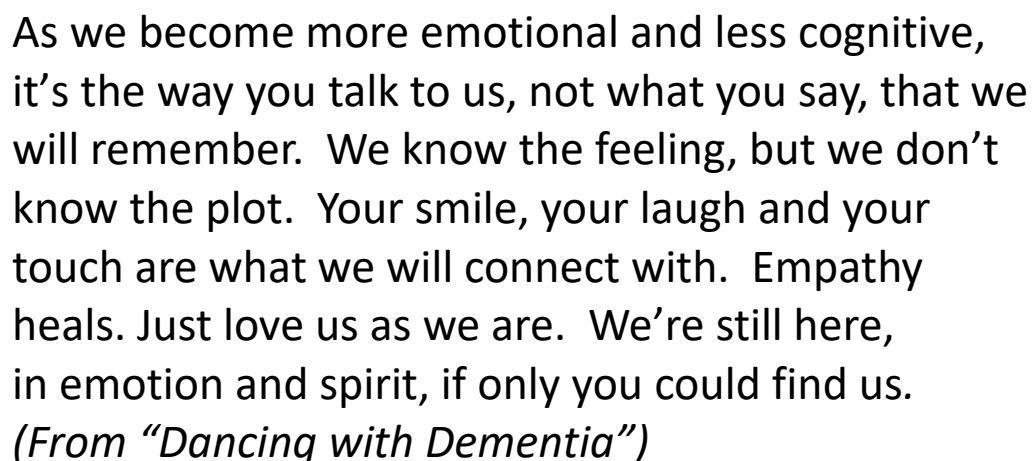
What are the connections which bring you strength and comfort? It may be useful to draw on the resources of spirituality, the bigger picture which helps us to make sense of our own lives. Spirituality is about:

- Hope and strength
- Trust
- Meaning and purpose
- Forgiveness
- Belief and faith in self, others, and for some this includes belief in a deity/higher power
- People's values
- Love and relationships
- Morality
- Creativity and self expression

From ["Spirituality in Nursing Care: A Pocket Guide"](#)

(published by the Royal College of Nursing in 2011)

Christine Bryden, who lives with dementia encourages us to connect in emotion and spirit.



As we become more emotional and less cognitive, it's the way you talk to us, not what you say, that we will remember. We know the feeling, but we don't know the plot. Your smile, your laugh and your touch are what we will connect with. Empathy heals. Just love us as we are. We're still here, in emotion and spirit, if only you could find us.
(From "Dancing with Dementia")

Energies

We're such a mix of body, mind and spirit.

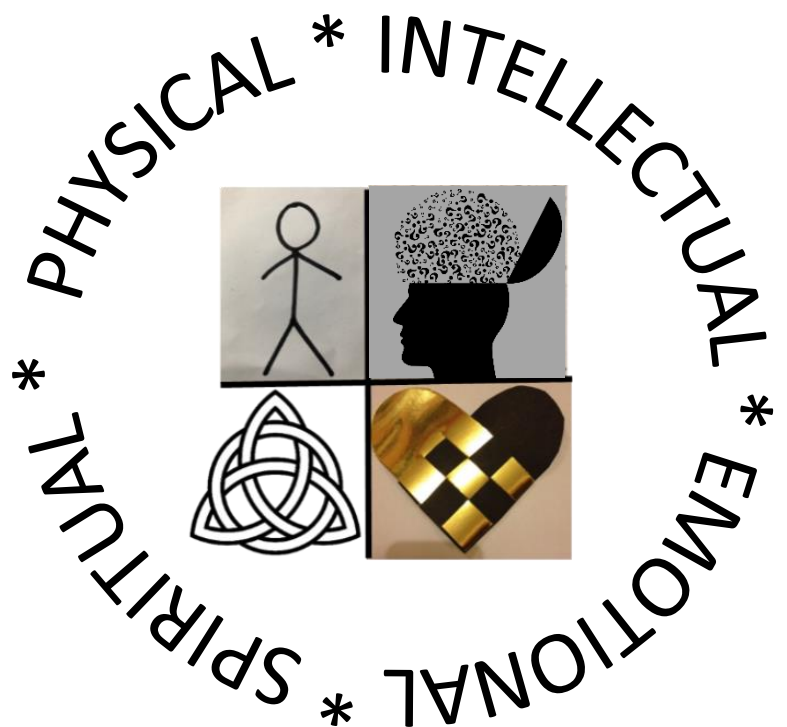
Notice these four energies – making up the word “PIES”:

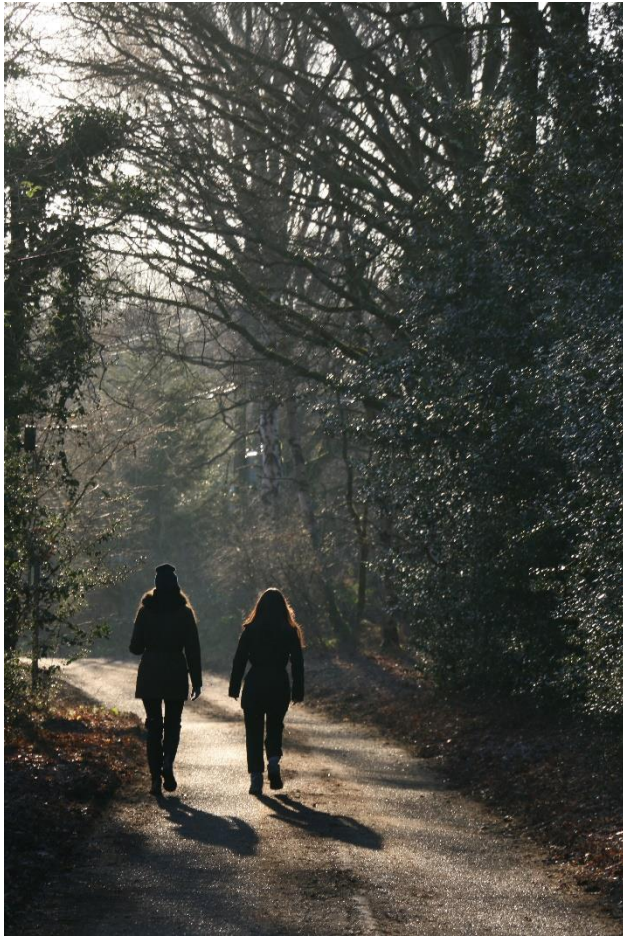
- *Physical (strength)*
- *Intellectual (head, the mind)*
- *Emotional (heart) and*
- *Spiritual (soul, or meaning and purpose).*

Consider your own energies –
physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual.

Are you finding any of these energies
are reduced by dementia?

Which of these energies are strongest
for you at present?

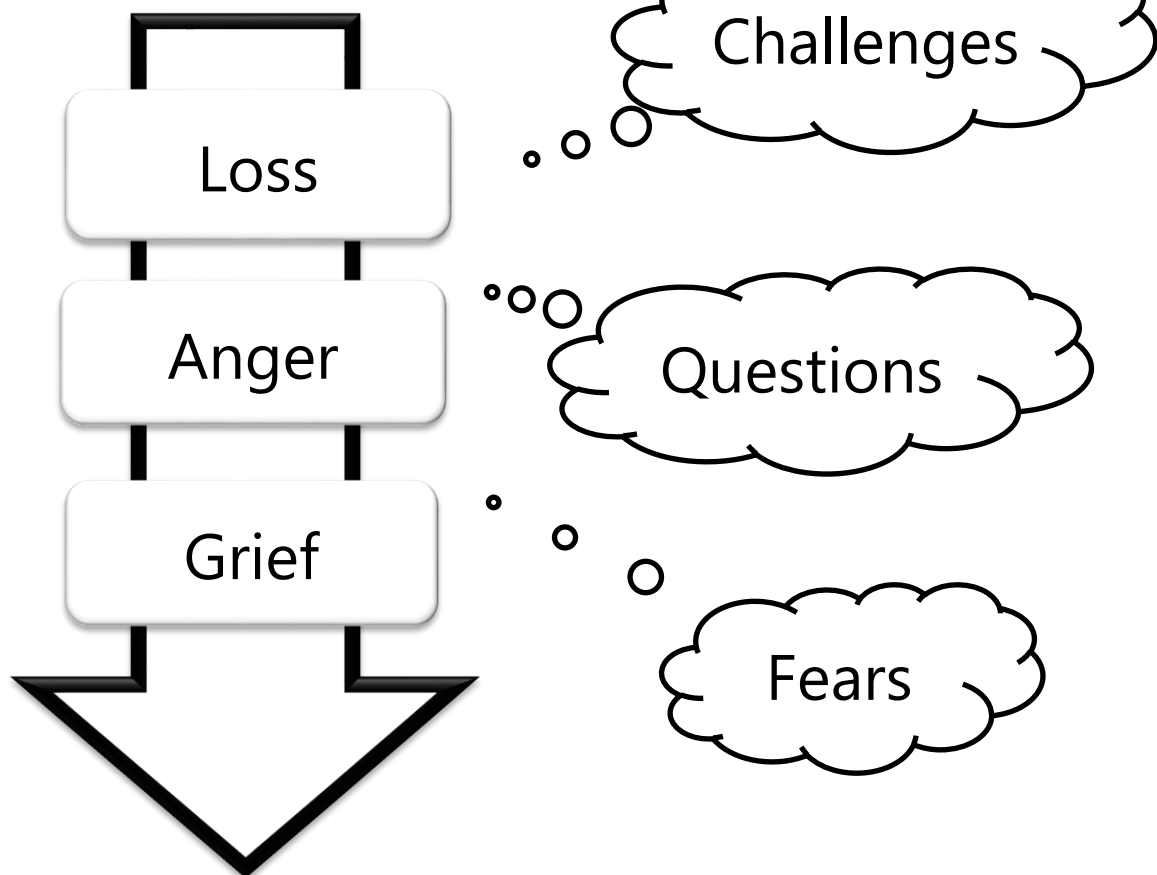




Lamenting

Are you finding space to acknowledge the cost and challenge of dementia?
As you let go of things that you value, who are the trusted people who are staying in step with you?

Photo by [Nigel Cohen](#) on [Unsplash](#)



& Celebrating

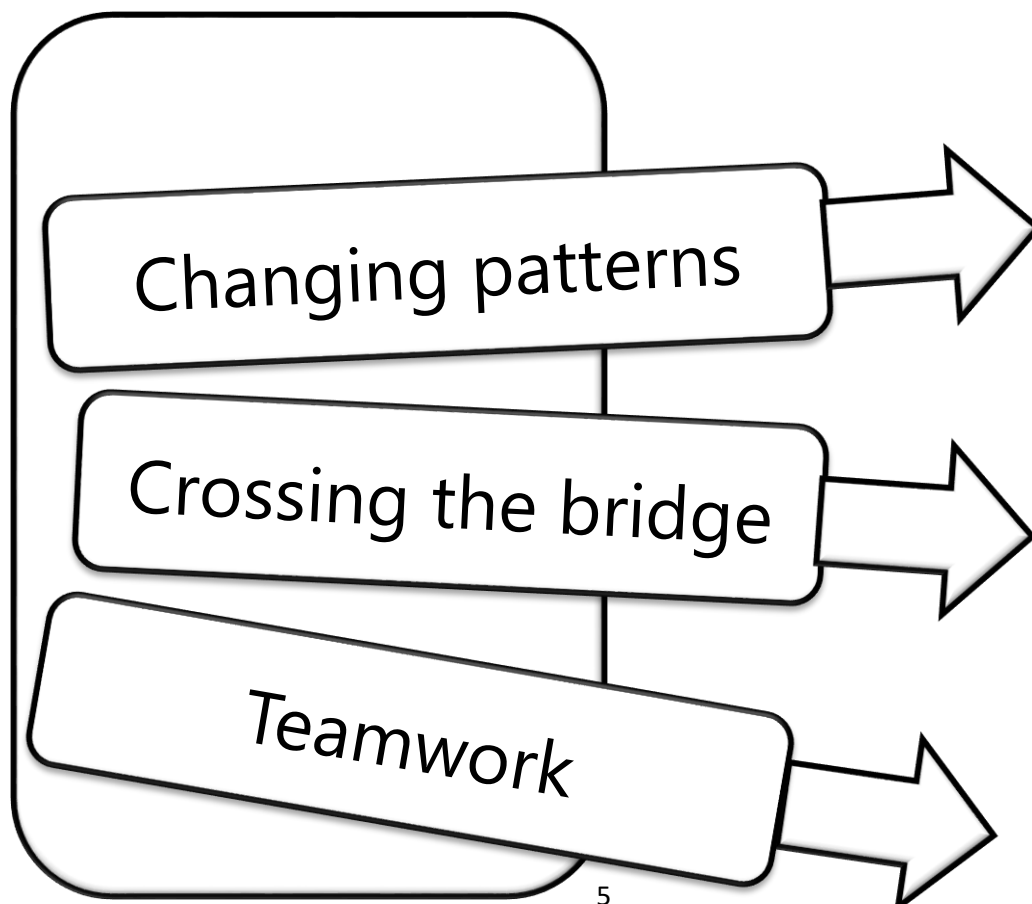
And are you finding space to notice the good things in life, each step of the way? Is it possible to recognise the light shining through, even when patterns change?



Photo by [David Tomaseti](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Three pictures may help us to notice what is life-giving today.

These are explored over the next three double pages.



Changing patterns – making meaning

If I look through a kaleidoscope and see a lovely pattern, I may want to show you. But if my hand jogs as I pass it across to you, it's gone – the pattern's changed. Rather than focusing on the old pattern that's gone, can we together see the light shining through in a different pattern?

It can be the same with dementia. We can choose to focus only on the old patterns that used to be good but have gone. Or we can acknowledge that patterns are changing and look for the light within the new patterns that are emerging.

There is nothing permanent except change.

Heraclitus

Greek philosopher

c.535 – 475 BC

The measure of intelligence is the ability to change.

Albert Einstein

Forget the former things;
do not dwell on the past.
See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up;
do you not perceive it?

Isaiah 43 18-19

If you don't like something,
change it.
If you can't change it,
change your attitude.

Maya Angelou



Creative Commons: Chris

What's changed
for you?

Where is the light
shining through now?

Crossing the bridge – being present

It's all about entering into another person's world.

In dementia, we learn to go with the feelings, rather than the facts, we learn not to contradict or challenge. Instead, we cross over the bridge. When we cross the bridge, we enter another person's world, meeting them where they are.

The Bridge by Joy Cowley

There are times in life
when we are called to be bridges,
not a great monument spanning distance
and carrying loads of heavy traffic,
but a simple bridge to help one person
from here to there over
some difficulty
such as pain, grief, fear, loneliness,
a bridge which opens the way
for ongoing journey.

When I become a bridge for another,
I bring upon myself a blessing,
for I escape from the small prison of self
and exist for a wider world.

I know of only one greater blessing
in this life, and that is,
to allow someone else
to be a bridge for me.



© Sarah Thorpe

Who's around for you,
meeting you where
you are?

What are the things that
help us to keep connections
with one another?

Teamwork – Remembering the person

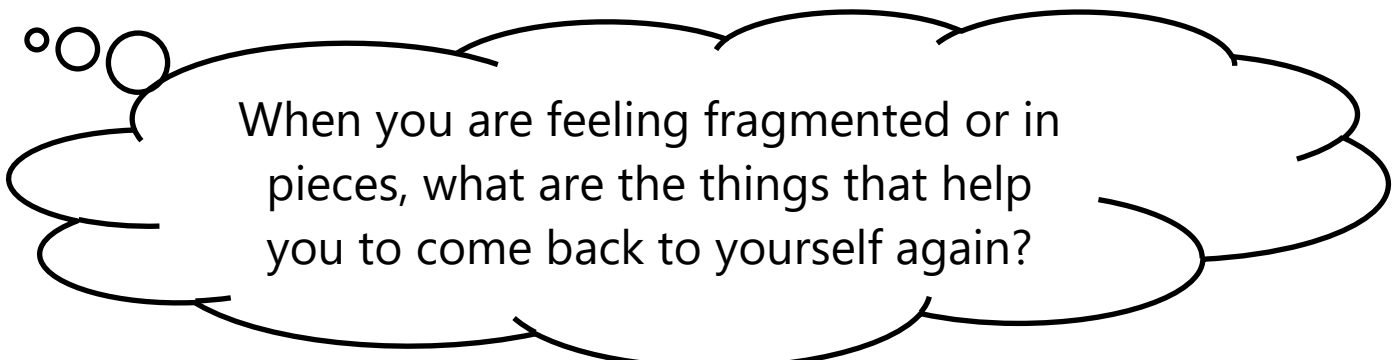
Have you ever wondered about why wild geese fly in a “V” formation? Scientists have discovered that the geese work together, taking it in turns to take the lead. Flying in formation, they can fly 70% further than any one bird could fly alone.

It’s the same with dementia. None of us has to go it alone. When we can work together as a team, we are able to help people live well with dementia for longer.

Remembering and re-remembering

Remembering can become increasingly difficult as dementia progresses. Sometimes, we can hold memories for one another.

There’s another sense of re-remembering, too – the opposite of dis-membering. When we are fragmented, how can we best support one another in coming back to ourselves?



When you are feeling fragmented or in pieces, what are the things that help you to come back to yourself again?



from Pixabay (free for commercial use)

Who are the team you
are relying on now?

from “Wild Geese” by Mary Oliver

the world...

calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting -
over and over announcing your place
in the family of things.

One Step at a Time

Belief... is not a well-fluffed nest, or a well-defended castle high on a hill. It is more like a rope bridge over a scenic gorge, sturdy but swinging back and forth, with plenty of light and plenty of air but precious little to hang on to except the stories you have heard: that this is the best and only way across, that it is possible, that it will bear your weight.

All you have to do is believe in the bridge more than you believe in the gorge, but fortunately you do not have to believe in it all by yourself. There are others to believe it with you, and even some to believe it for you when your own belief wears thin. They have crossed the bridge ahead of you and are waiting on the other side. You can talk to them if you like, as you step into the air, putting one foot ahead of the other, just that: just one step at a time.

From "The Preaching Life" by Barbara Brown-Taylor

If you want to know more about dementia-friendly churches, or if you want to share any thoughts/comments after reading this leaflet, contact Sarah Thorpe, Dementia-Friendly Church Enabler, Diocese of Lichfield

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Web: www.lichfield.anglican.org/dementia-friendly-church/

Blog: <https://www.lichfield.anglican.org/news?tagid=46>

