



Creating a New Language for the Eden Alternative Journey

Words Make Worlds...

The language we use to describe who we are and what we do defines the care environment. Historically, traditional approaches to care have been built on institutional language that diminishes the role of some, while elevating the role of others. The language we choose may contribute to the hierarchical pattern of decision-making that creates a mechanical, routine-driven daily schedule that drains the spirit of all care partners involved (the Elders or individuals accepting support¹, employees, and family members).

Dr. William Thomas, Co-founder of The Eden Alternative® describes such language as “dragon food,” because it feeds the ever-present dragon that is waiting to re-establish the status quo of the institutional model of care and destroy all efforts to change the culture and improve well-being for all. It is important along the Eden Alternative journey to adopt new language that can help shift attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors, so that they better support the new world being created.

On the following pages, you will find several examples to help your care partner teams get started. Some of the suggestions may apply to particular kinds of care environments, while others have relevance across the full continuum of care. Use this tool as a springboard for conversations in your teams regarding additional language that may need to shift to support your unique goals.

¹ The Eden Alternative defines an Elder as someone who by virtue of life experience is here to teach us how to live. Milestone 1 of the Path to Mastery lays out the shared fundamental groundwork for all organizations on the Eden Alternative journey, wherever they may fall along the continuum of care. As a common resource, Milestone 1 material assumes that organizations serving different populations may not relate to the term “Elder” as the most appropriate identifier of those they support, regardless of this definition. We encourage you to “fill in the blank,” as needed, wherever you see the phrase “Elder or individual accepting support.” Apart from how you choose to identify the individual accepting support, this person should be seen as an active partner in his or her own care.

Institutional Words	Eden Alternative Words	Definition
Activities	By the name of what is happening (e.g. watching TV, visiting with friends, baking); cultural, recreational, educational and leisure programs; lifelong learning; event; simple pleasure	Times during the day when the Elder engages in doing or being in a manner that brings meaning to his/her life.
Activity Calendar	Community or Social Calendar (see also Daily Rhythm of Life)	Where people in the community come together to spend time in meaningful events. The social calendar can be a way for an individual, if they choose, to be a part of his/her rhythm of daily life.
Activity Room	Creative arts room, art studio, artists' workshop, studio, painting studio, pottery studio	Room where Elders can go to express their creativity.
Admission, placement	Welcome, become a member, join the community, Move in day	The ritual created to welcome the Elder who comes to live in the home whether it is permanent or temporary.
Allow, "get to", delegate	Empowered, choice, authority	Empowerment is about bringing forth the power that people already possess by creating an environment where the input of all is valued and respected. Empowerment must walk hand-in-hand with authority, accountability and responsibility.
Alzheimer's or Dementia Unit	Home to people living with dementia, specific name chosen for the particular area a group of people live in	Localized area within a building where those Elders who live with memory loss receive assistance that supports optimum quality of life. In a person-directed care environment, their living area name should avoid words like "memory", "dementia" or "special needs" which introduce the disease before the person.

Annual performance review	Personal growth plan; Growth Plan Review	Care Partner Growth Reviews have three purposes: to summarize and review the care partner's performance over a set period of time, to help them to grow in areas where they need assistance, or to express an interest in learning more skills and to become better well-known.
Basement	Lower level, terrace level, garage level	Lower level of the building where Elders might live or which sometimes houses offices or storage rooms.
Bath house or tub room	Bathroom, spa	A room where Elders can take a bath or shower.
Bed, Unit, Hall, room	Neighborhood, household, house, names that reflect the stories/history of the people who live there, apartment, suite, residence, cottage	The location where the Elder lives within the building.
Behavior	Unmet need	Actions are purposeful expressions of needs. When care partners cannot define the need behind the action, it is termed a behavior as though it is something to be corrected. When the unmet need is defined and met, relationships deepen and the individual experiences better quality of life.
Bibs	Napkins	Covering to protect clothing during meals. This is about changing what is used as well as the language.
Bus	Transportation services, coach, shuttle, chauffeur service, car	Method of transporting Elders to desired locations outside, in the larger community.
Call light	Life line, alert	A mechanism for Elders to alert care partners when they need assistance.
	Care	The Eden Alternative's definition of care is "that which helps another to grow." This is in contrast to the tendency to define care as treatment or a long list of tasks to complete.
Care Plan	My story, growth plan	A person-first story of what is important in the individual's life, their life goals and how they intend to accomplish those goals.

Care Giver/ Care Receiver	Care Partner	The care partner concept redefines people's roles and responsibilities. It acknowledges that opportunities to give and receive are abundant and experienced by everyone involved in the care relationship. The term "care partner" evens the playing field, as it is often easy to get trapped in the traditional, one-dimensional, care giver to care receiver relationship. Care partners work together toward mutual objectives and benefits. Care partners help each other be their best.
Interdisciplinary Team	Care Partner Team	Care Partners that come together consistently to support life within specific physical space in the community. They share in daily responsibilities and are committed to helping one another to grow. The team includes Elders, employees, healthcare professionals and families.
	Caring Community	An environment characterized by close and meaningful relationships. It is best created when the employee care partners have the opportunity to know a small number of Elders intimately so they are better able to respond to individual needs, desires and create a life worth living for all.
	Rhythm of daily life	The flow of daily life in the home, wherever home may be, and individuals' lives, based on the needs, choices and preferences of the Elders, not the needs of the organization or the employees. That can include arising, sleeping, eating, bathing, relaxing, socializing, and treatments.
Departments	Support teams, neighborhoods, households, blended roles	A description of a group of care partners who work together regularly to support the growth of all members of the team. Over time, they become empowered and accountable to direct their own daily actions. Instead of narrow job descriptions, cross-training is provided to blend roles so that needs can be met.

Diagnosis-based labels: diabetic, dementia patient, hip fracture	Person first language: the person's name, she is living with dementia, she is living with diabetes	Labeling someone based on a diagnosis or condition surrenders their individuality. Person-first language puts the person before any diagnosis or condition.
Diapers	Underwear, undergarments	Special underwear that people wear to protect their skin and clothing from urine or bowel accidents.
Dietary	Kitchen, dining room, café, restaurant, bistro, or by the name it has been given that reflect the stories/history of the residents (See also convivium)	Where people gather to share meals together.
Disability	Different abilities	A life experience that people are either born with or acquire during their lifetime. It challenges the individuals and their care partners to find new ways to bring forth their strengths and gifts to benefit themselves and others.
Discharge	Saying goodbye, change residences, leave, go home, depart	A description of the process of helping an Elder move on to their next living environment.
	Doing and Being	Doing and Being are a part of every human life. Each dominates during different times in a person's life. In creating community the gifts of Doing and Being should both be recognized and experienced by all.
Eating, assisting with mealtime	Convivium	Convivium is more than a shared meal; it is a shared, meaningful experience of companionship and conversation in a warm and cozy space.
	Certified Eden Associate	Someone who has completed a three-day workshop that covers the Eden Alternative Principles and provides tools and resources to implement the philosophy within an Eldercare organization.
	Eden at Home	An approach to bringing the Eden Alternative Principles to life for Elders and their care partner teams in their own home and in the larger community.

	Eden Educator	An independent contractor for the Eden Alternative organization who leads the various educational workshops offered by the organization within the United States.
	Eden LifeLong Living	An approach to bringing the Eden Alternative Principles to life for individuals of all ages living with developmental, intellectual, and psychological challenges.
	Eden Mentor	Certified Eden Associates who have distinguished themselves through their work to create better living environments for the Elders and the care partners. These are volunteers who work with Eldercare organizations and The Eden Alternative to provide a support network.
	Eden Registry, Eden Registry Member	An Eldercare organization that has made a commitment to fully integrate the Eden Alternative Philosophy throughout their environment and publicly declare that commitment through a voluntary registration process.
	Eden Tree plaque	A round, wooden plaque with a tree in the center and 10 empty spaces around the top. It is a visible symbol of the Registry Member's commitment to the Eden Alternative Philosophy.
Elderly	Elder... Someone who by virtue of life experience is here to teach us how to live.	The word "Elderly" is limited to a chronological experience of aging, and often implies "decline." The Eden Alternative's definition of Elder harkens back to ancient times, when Elders were sought out for the gifts of their wisdom. It implies that you needn't be chronologically "older" to be an Elder.
Facility, building, nursing home, program	Community, campus, village, cottage, cabin, home, accommodations, neighborhood, by name which reflects the stories/history of the people who live in the home	How to describe the whole of the environment where Elders live.

	Frost	Those times when people act out of cynicism, stinginess, and pessimism. To overcome frost, the people within an organization need to warm the soil.
	Learning Circles	Powerful tool that levels and balances people to hold meaningful dialogue that improves understanding and communication, builds community and strengthens relationships.
Hierarchical organization	Elder-centered community, person-directed care environment	Decision-making, organizational structure and employee care partner roles are designed around the needs, choices, and preferences of the Elders living in the environment. The Elders are the decision-makers in their home.
	Human Habitat	An environment in which many varied species thrive and interact.
Job description	Care Partner Role	Job descriptions as they are traditionally written are a series of tasks a person is responsible for. Care Partner Roles describe a new type of relationship between the people who live and work in the home. It explains how each person contributes to the experience of home beyond any tasks they have the skills to complete. Care partner roles are designed to inform leadership and to help employees to realize the organization's objectives and purpose.
Locked unit, Memory Care area, Dementia Neighborhood, Special Needs area	Home where people living with.....live (people first, disease/disability second in explaining the services)	A home for a group of Elders needing assistance. Avoid using names for the living area that define the diagnosis of those that live there. Put the people first.
Manager, Department Head, Supervisor	Leader, team leader, coach, mentor, guide	The people who are accountable to support the care partners while ensuring the day-to-day operations of the home remain strong and stable. In The Eden Alternative, leadership is defined as the ability to influence others to bring about positive change.

	Support care partners with expertise Growth Partner	Care partners who assist others in their field of expertise, along with providing support for growth of the neighborhoods and the individuals who live and work in them. Growth Partners support, educate, and guide care partners to a successful life experience in their community. Growth Partners provide honest and timely feedback through regular evaluations and on-the-job training.
	Meaning	That which fulfills a genuine purpose or function. It is unique to each individual.
Nurse, nursing assistants, social worker, activity staff, dietary staff, housekeepers, etc.	Care partner, Shahbaz, Growth Partner	An employee, family member or companion that partners with the Elder to assist them with their daily life and routine.
Oral cares	Brushing your teeth	The usual routine of cleaning teeth in the morning, after meals and at bedtime.
Patient, Resident, Customer, Client	Elder, person, individual, by their name	How we address individuals who live in Eldercare environments. In The Eden Alternative, we define an Elder as someone who by virtue of life experience is here to teach us.
Performance expectations, ground rules	Code of Ethics, Team Agreements	A list of statements that defines how the members of the group will interact and treat each other in order to create a positive, growing environment. This is developed through a group process involving all members.
Peri-care	Cleansing	The care provided to assist Elders in keeping their skin clean.
Policies and procedures	Well-Being Strategies	Policies are guidelines adopted by an organization to reach its long-term goals. Procedures are the specific methods employed to express policies in day-to-day operations of the organization. The ultimate outcome for person-directed care is well-being for all. Therefore, The Eden Alternative Domains of Well-Being should frame all systems.

Rehab, Therapy room	Gym, exercise room, health club, health and fitness club, wellness center	Where habilitation happens with specialized support.
Scheduler	Team-scheduling	A process whereby the working schedules for the employee care partners and others are worked out through team discussion and negotiation.
Semi-private room, ward	Shared accommodation	A way to describe a room that is home to more than one Elder.
Shift	Names of the people working at that time of day	As long as employee care partners are identified by their “shift” there will always be a division. Switch to identifying the people working by name.
	Simple pleasures	Something that has traditionally brought joy to the individual’s day and holds great meaning for the person.
Tasks, ADLs, Treatment	Care, service, assistance, amenity, personal service(s), or call it what it is like a bath, brushing teeth, getting dressed, going to the bathroom	In The Eden Alternative, care means helping another to grow. The other optional words are ways to describe how the Elders are given assistance in their home, wherever home may be.
Therapy services, therapists	Habilitation, habilitators, care partners	Dr. William Thomas defines habilitation as “the effort to bring forth existing but latent potential within a person or a group of people.” Therapists are part of the care partner team. Their role includes identifying an individual’s strengths and sharing them with the rest of the team.
Tray service	Take-out, delivery service, room service	A method of delivering meals to the Elders, especially those who wish to eat in a location other than the main dining room of the home. The food may be delivered on a tray, but the presentation should honor the meaning of the mealtime ritual.
	Warming the soil	The action of doing good deeds for others without expecting anything in return in order to create a warmer living and working environment. It is also known as a mitzvah. It creates an environment filled with trust, optimism and generosity.

	Well-being	A contented state of being. The goal of The Eden Alternative is to create well-being for all. The Eden Alternative defines well-being through seven domains: identity, growth, autonomy, security, connectedness, meaning, and joy.
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Language for Care Partner Roles:

Medical Model Job Title	New Role	Explanation
Activities, Activity Director, Activity Coordinator	Life Wellness Coordinator, Life Enrichment, Household Coordinator, Community Development Guide/Advocate, Care Partner	This role helps build strong, caring relationships among all care partners by providing education, resources, opportunities and support.
Administrator	Community Mentor, Guide, Head Coach, Care Partner	This person is a servant leader/mentor/coach that helps others grow to become their very best. They help others to bring change and overcome barriers to create a Human Habitat, where life is worth living. They understand and teach others that the resources, policies and regulations ensure that each care partners' needs are met.
Caregiver, C.N.A., housekeeper, nurse, laundry, maintenance, activities, dietary etc.	Care Partner	" <i>Care Partner</i> " describes the individuals who live and work in the home, as well as anyone who is connected to it. We are no longer a community of caregivers and care receivers, divided up by departments, titles, or whether we live or work here. We are all partnering to ensure that everyone has the chance to grow and relationships are reciprocal. The care partner concept redefines people's roles and responsibilities. It

		acknowledges that opportunities to give and receive are abundant and experienced by everyone involved in the care relationship. The term “care partner” evens the playing field, as it is often easy to get trapped in the traditional, one-dimensional, care giver to care receiver relationship. Care partners work together toward mutual objectives and benefits. Care partners help each other be their best.
Certified Nursing Assistant	Professional Care Coordinators, Care Partners, Resident Assistants, Resident Aides, Care Housing Attendants, Resident Service Aides, Elder Associates, Quality of Life Coordinator	The role of the Certified Nursing Assistant, by its very title, has led these individuals to focus on and be directed by those who supervise them more than those they support (the Elders). In Eden Alternative Registered homes, the individual’s focus is to become a partner in care with the Elders. In our healthcare system, being a C.N.A. is also seen as one that is low on the hierarchy. Changing the title, description and their reporting relationships helps grow the individuals called to this important role in the home.
Director, Manager	Leader, Guide, Coach, Facilitator, Liaison, Mentor, Care Partner	The change in language helps shift the perspective from one of top-down authority to one of support, service, assistance, and helping others to grow through empowerment.
Housekeeping, Dietary	Home Attendant, Homemaker, Care Partner	This role is a combination of housekeeping and setting up for meals.

Medical Records Personnel	Legacy Keeper, Care Partner	The medical record document is where people go first to become acquainted with Elders who make their home in the community. A Legacy Keeper's responsibility is to collect the Elder's personal story, their preferences, simple pleasures, <i>and</i> their medical needs in this document. The story of the Elder is something that should be carefully constructed to ensure that the whole person is reflected in what it contains.
Nurse	Clinical Advocate, Resident Care Coordinator, Quality of Care Coordinator, Clinical Mentor, Care Coach, Care Partner	Responsible for monitoring clinical outcomes for the Elders and helping to grow the skills of those most closely caring for the Elders daily.
Social Services, Activities	Neighborhood Advocate, Care Partner	Blended role between social services and activities. They are a liaison between the community and family members.
Therapist, Restorative Aide	Habilitator, Care Partner	<i>Habilitator</i> is a new description for those who previously saw themselves in a role of rehabilitation. Dr. Thomas describes habilitation as "the effort to bring forth existing, but latent potential within a person or a group of people." It is a different calling that grows out of meaningful relationships focused on knowing the whole person and a desire to help them grow. Focusing on the individual's abilities, not disabilities, brings great growth.