

# What Increases Dignity

Dignity is strengthened when a person is **recognized as valuable — either simply because they are human, or because of what they do, say, or represent.**

It grows in two main ways:

1. **Unconditional recognition** — when people are treated with basic respect, compassion, and fairness, regardless of status or ability. This includes access to rights, protection under the law, freedom from discrimination, and being cared for with empathy and integrity. These affirm the **inherent worth** of every person.
2. **Conditional affirmation** — when someone's actions, choices, voice, or contributions are acknowledged. This includes being heard, trusted, given responsibility, praised for effort, or allowed to participate meaningfully. These affirm a person's **agency, capability, and value to others.**

Dignity, as a fundamental human right, cannot be lost or increased — it is inherent and equal in every person. However, the experience of dignity, or 'felt dignity,' can rise or fall depending on how individuals are treated. While 'felt dignity' is a more precise term in some contexts, it is often simplified to 'dignity' for ease of understanding.

Institutions, carers, and systems increase dignity when they:

- Act transparently and fairly
- Protect individual rights and freedoms
- Provide consistent, respectful care
- Give people a voice and the ability to make informed choices
- Hold power accountable — as through a free press or just legal systems

In short, dignity is upheld when we are **seen, respected, and empowered** — not only as human beings, but also as contributors to the world around us.