



Communicating with People with Dementia

DO -

- ◆ Observe **body language**
- ◆ **Include the person** in conversation
- ◆ **Be patient** with them and yourself
- ◆ **Be sensitive** about telling bad news
- ◆ **Validate the emotion** behind their words
- ◆ Live in **their reality**
- ◆ Offer **choices**
- ◆ **Reminisce**
- ◆ Give **simple instruction**
- ◆ Step away to **avoid confrontation**

DON'T -

- ◆ Expect **old communication patterns** to still work
- ◆ **Exclude them from conversation**, especially when it's about them
- ◆ **Take it personally**
- ◆ Feel a need to **retell it**
- ◆ Try to **redirect before validating** emotion
- ◆ Reason or **argue**
- ◆ Use **open-ended questions**
- ◆ **Quiz** their memory
- ◆ Give **too many steps** at once
- ◆ Forget **help is available**

Helpful Tips

MAKE EYE CONTACT: try to be at their level so they can focus on you

SHOW RESPECT: identify yourself to them

TOUCH: a hand on their arm gets attention or conveys interest

ALLOW RESPONSE TIME: don't rush or answer for them

LOOK FOR EMOTIONS BEHIND WORDS: emotions remain intact even when language fails

USE SHORT SENTENCES: only include one thought

MAINTAIN PATIENCE: repeat information as needed