

Communicating with the Person with Middle and Later Stage Dementia

Verbal:

1. Use short words.
2. Do not use pronouns.
3. Use simple sentences.
4. Identify yourself; it helps the person to remember names.
5. Break down requests into small steps.

Non-Verbal:

1. Be sure your manner is calm and unhurried.
2. Offer liberal doses of supportive touch.
3. Look directly at the person with dementia when communicating with him/her.
4. Be pleasant and respectful.

Listening:

1. Listen carefully – You may get only one clear word to help you understand.
2. Observe gestures — The person may rely on these when words fail.
3. If you do not understand, listen for words closely related to the words the person with dementia uses (i.e. mother for wife).
4. Attend to the feelings associated with what the person is saying or trying to say. Respond empathetically to the feelings.

General Rules:

1. Accommodate for those that have a loss of hearing.
2. Reduce distraction and competing noises.
3. Go slow and be patient. Show that you care.
5. Do not insist on reality.
6. Do not argue. You never win!
7. Do not challenge and question beyond the person with dementia's ability.

How to Contact the Alzheimer's Association – Heart of America Chapter 1.800.272.3900 • alz.org/kansascity

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