

COMMUNICATION DO'S AND DON'TS

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- Dementia may cause a disruption in brain signals that affect the ability to communicate.
- Non-verbal behavior has purpose and is a form of communication.
- Try not to show frustration, impatience, or anger if communication is impaired.
- If needed, take a break. Create a pause by taking a few deep breaths, counting to 10, getting a glass of water, or leaving the room.
- Use these techniques to help achieve and maintain calm, clean, safe and loved.

COMMUNICATION DO'S

- Respond to emotional needs.
- Do more listening, observing, and connecting.
- Mirror the other person's mood. For example, if they're enthusiastic, raise the energy level but if they're sad, try a more subdued approach.
- Try to make any questions ones that can be answered by "yes" or "no."
- Be patient when waiting for a response.
- Use positive language. Try not to say the word "no" or "don't."
- Use simple, direct language.
- Talk about one subject at a time.
- Use repetition and descriptive language to add specificity.
- Show respect and preserve dignity.
- Speak slowly and distinctively. Project a calm and reassuring manner.
- Give limited, specific choices rather than broad categories such as tea or coffee rather than something to drink.
- Turn questions into answers by affirmatively suggesting a desired behavior such as "let's go the restroom" instead of asking if the restroom is needed.

- Call the person by name, use eye contact, and approach from the front.
- Reduce background noise.
- Employ humor at the appropriate time, but never at another's expense. It can be a good way to cover over a communication mistake.
- Apologizing to the person can diffuse a situation.
- Acknowledge feelings associated with communication, even if it is incorrect information, then redirect the conversation.
- Engage the person in routine activities to preserve a feeling of belongingness.
- Be observant of reactions to communication and adjust as needed. Every day can be different.
- Allow the person to tell their stories, even if they are repeated.

COMMUNICATION DON'TS

- Do not take things too literally.
- Do not use baby talk.
- Do not rush.
- Do not correct or quiz.
- Try not to ask any question that requires short-term memory retrieval.
- Do not argue unless a safety issue is the problem. If so, give a short explanation that safety is important and then offer your understanding of the person's feelings.
- Do not ask if the person remembers something, as this sets up the possibility of failing. Instead, include the person in conversation by connecting with a past memory using a story that is familiar.
- Avoid pointing out to the person that something that was told to them has been forgotten.
- Saying goodbye may be distressing, so it may be necessary to tell the person that an errand needs to be run in order to leave.