
COMMUNICATING FOR SUCCESS

Non-verbal strategies for effective communication

1. Remember that your mood will be “mirrored” by the person with dementia. If you act rushed or tense, the person will often react to your stress and become anxious or agitated.
2. Approach the person from the front so that you don't startle them.
3. Establish eye contact when speaking.
4. Speak at eye level whenever possible. If the person is sitting, kneel or pull up a chair beside him
5. Use gentle touch to calm or reassure a person. Be aware that someone who is unaccustomed to physical affection may be frightened by a hand on the arm, and touch should not be used with those people.
6. Point or demonstrate where you want the person to go, or what you want him to do. Making the gesture of face washing will help when words no longer make sense. “Does it hurt here?” while pointing may be easier than “Where does it hurt?”

Verbal strategies for effective communication

1. Use a calm, gentle voice.
2. Call the person by name and identify yourself if necessary.
3. Use short, simple sentences. “Let's walk to the dining room now.”
4. Speak slowly.
5. Eliminate distracting noises. Turn off the TV, close the door if there are voices in the next room.
6. Use familiar words, “Do you need to use the toilet?” instead of “Do you need to urinate?”
7. Give simple choices, “Would you like milk or coffee?” instead of “What would you like to drink?”
8. Give one instruction at a time. “Please sit down.” “Now let's take off your shoes.”
9. Allow enough time for the person to respond. Repeat if necessary