

10 Tips When Talking with Someone with Dementia



Being able to communicate clearly with a person with dementia has benefits for each person and your relationship. Using these tips may help you both feel understood.

- 1 Ensure hearing and vision are functioning properly:**
 - If hearing or vision appears to be a problem, get an assessment.
 - A family doctor can start assessments and refer to specialists.
- 2 Get up close and “personal”:**
 - Use the person’s name and look them in the eye.
 - Sit or stand at the same level as the person you are speaking to.
- 3 Reduce choices:**
 - Too many choices can frustrate someone with dementia.
 - Avoid open-ended questions.
 - For example, if you are discussing activities, don’t ask, “Where would you like to go today?” It’s better to ask, “Would you like to go to the park?”
- 4 Diminish distractions:**
 - Background noise from TV, radio or even a fan can distract the person during a conversation. Turn these off.
 - Talking and listening in a group may confuse or overwhelm
 - The person may lose track of conversations in these situations. Find a quiet place to talk.
- 5 Keep things simple:**
 - Refer to nouns by their actual name. For example, during a walk, when pointing out a pretty bird, say “bird” instead of “it”.
- 6 Avoid conflict:**
 - Don’t argue with a person who has dementia. Arguing will make both of you more agitated. Recognize when walking away from a building argument is the best course of action.

- Avoid comments, such as: “I just told you that,” and “You’re wrong” as these may make the situation worse.

7 Enter their world:

- Validate the feelings and/or thoughts of a person with dementia.
- For example, if the person believes they have been left alone, while in reality their caregiver was in the other room, you might say “You must have felt alone, and I know you don’t like that feeling. I’m here now.”

8 Extra points for patience:

- Slow down. Don’t rush.
- Try not to complete their sentences. It won’t help them remember and it can be more frustrating and take more time.
- Try asking a question that might jog their memory. For example, if they are wandering around the kitchen and saying, “I want...I want...,” you can ask, “Are you hungry? Would you like something to eat?”

9 Clue into their visual cues:

- Your family member or friend may not be able to clearly talk about their emotions. Paying attention to their facial expressions and body position can help understand them.
- Body language is a powerful communication tool too. Physical signs or gestures can help to communicate. For example, when someone is looking around their bed they might be looking for an item they need.

10 Get creative with your communication:

- If words are not sufficient to get your point across, don’t be afraid to experiment with different types of communication.
- Use verbal, visual and auditory cues, and gentle touch to help your loved one understand.
- For example, if it is time to get out of bed, open the curtains, show them the light outside, and show them their daytime clothes.



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