



# Dementia: Top Ten Tips For Dealing With Symptoms

- STOP!!** Think about what you are about to do and consider the best way to do it. PLAN AND EXPLAIN – Who you are; What you want to do; Why you want to do it etc
- SMILE!!** The person who takes their cue from you will mirror your relaxed and positive body language and tone of voice.
- GO SLOW!!** You have a lot to do and you are in a hurry but the person you are caring for isn't. How would you feel if someone came into your bedroom, pulled back your blankets and started pulling you out of bed without even giving you time to wake up properly?
- GO AWAY!!** If the person is resistive or aggressive but is NOT causing harm to themselves or others, leave them alone. Give them time to settle down and approach them later.
- GIVE THEM SPACE!!** Any activity that involves invasion of personal space INCREASES THE RISK OF ASSAULT AND/OR AGGRESSION. Every time you provide care for a person you are invading their space.
- STAND ASIDE!!** Always provide care from the side not the front of the person, where you may be a target to hit, kick etc
- DISTRACT THEM!!** Talk to the person about things they enjoyed in the past. Whilst you are providing care, allow them to hold a towel or something that will distract them.
- KEEP IT QUIET!!** Check noise level and reduce it when and where possible. Turn off the radio and TV etc.
- DON'T ARGUE!!** They are RIGHT and you are WRONG! The demented brain tells the person they can't be wrong.
- KNOW THE PERSON!!** Orientate to their surroundings as necessary. If they become upset by this reality, validate and agree with their feelings, instead of continuing to cause them any more upset.

*Adapted from the Regional Dementia Management Strategy (Australia 2001)*

# DEMENTIA COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES: DO'S AND DON'TS OF COMMUNICATION:

## DO



Talk to the person in a tone of voice that conveys respect and dignity.

Keep your explanations short. Use clear and flexible language.

Maintain eye contact by positioning yourself at the person's eye level.

Look directly at the person and ensure that you have their attention before you speak. Always begin by identifying yourself and explain what it is you propose to do.

Use visual cues whenever possible. Be realistic in expectations.

Observe and attempt to interpret the person's non verbal communication.

Paraphrase and use a calm and reassuring tone of voice.

Speak slowly and say individual words clearly. Use strategies to reduce the effects of hearing impairment.

Encourage talk about things that they are familiar with.

Use touch if appropriate.

## DON'T



Talk to the person in 'baby talk' or as if you are talking to a child.

Use complicated words or phrases and long sentences.

Glare at, or "eyeball" the person you are talking too.

Begin a task without explaining who you are or what you are about to do. Talk to the person without eye contact, such as while rummaging in a drawer to select clothing.

Try and compete with a distracting environment.

Provoke a catastrophic reaction through unrealistic expectations or by asking the person to do more than one task at a time.

Disregard your own non verbal communication.

Disregard talk that may seem to be "rambling".

Shout or talk too fast.

Interrupt unless it cannot be helped.

Attempt to touch or invade their personal space if they are showing signs of fear or aggression.

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