

DEMENTIA

“GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATION”

1. BEFORE TALKING WITH SOMEONE WITH DEMENTIA OR ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE:

- Know your residents on your shift (know their likes, dislikes and names – the name they like to be called)
- Think about how you are presenting yourself
- Try a CALM, gentle, matter of fact approach
- Use a non-demanding approach – try humor, cheerfulness
- Try using a gentle touch, from the front (if appropriate) to communicate your message
- Begin the conversation socially (i.e., “Hi, my name is Michelle”)

2. WHILE TALKING WITH SOMEONE WITH DEMENTIA OR ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE”

- Approach from the front and talk to the person in a place with no distractions
- Begin by identifying yourself and addressing the person by the “best” name
- Look directly at the person and make sure you have his/her attention
- Make sure you are at eye level with the resident (not looking down)
- Speak slowly and say words clearly and in a soft low pitch voice – gentle tone
- Ask one thing at a time and do not rush
- Use short, simple sentences and questions (e.g., “are you cold?”)
- Use very concrete terms and familiar words
- Use names, instead of he and she, when referring to others
- Talk in a warm, easy-going, pleasant way
- Talk in a quiet, calm voice.

- Speak in positive terms
- Ignore harmless hallucinations or delusions
- Treat the person with RESPECT

3. **WHEN YOU ARE HAVING TROUBLE BEING UNDERSTOOD**

- Be patient; allow enough time
- Try to demonstrate visually what you are saying by pointing, touching or drawing
- Use short simple terms
- Be repetitive and consistent
- Try a less difficult, more simple way to say it
- Try a hug and a change of subject.
- Do not rush the person. Allow plenty of time for a response. If there is none repeat the question, exactly as it was phrased the first time. If there still is no answer, reword the phrase.

4. **WHEN YOU ARE HAVING TROUBLE UNDERSTANDING:**

- Listen actively and carefully to what the person is trying to say
- Try to focus on a word or phrase that makes sense
- Respond to the emotional tone of the statement
- Experiment with supplying words
- Encourage the person to point or gesture
- Stay calm and be patient
- Ask family members about possible meanings for words, names, phrases
- Listen to their voice and gestures which may give clues to understanding

5. THINGS NOT TO DO:

- Don't argue and don't give orders to the person.
- Don't tell the person what he/she can't do.
- Don't "talk down" or appear superior to the person.
- Don't treat them like a child.
- Don't ask questions that require the person to remember facts.
- Don't talk about people with the disease in front of them.
- Don't use sarcasm or inappropriate humor. Alzheimer's Residents' misinterpret humor.
- Don't orient the person to person, place and time – validate their feelings and statements.

WHEN VERBAL COMMUNICATION DOESN'T WORK

- Try distracting the person.
- Ignore angry or agitated statements if you can't think of a positive response.
- Try other forms of communicating (songs, massage, favorite foods, walking, etc.)
- Give the person something to do. Try activities, try a walk, try giving them food or something to hold.
- Slow down!

Try again later.