

8 Tips to Communicate with a Loved One with Dementia

4 STAGES OF DEMENTIA

There are 4 stages of dementia that are characterized by their relative communication skill deterioration.

1. Early-stage dementia

Struggle to concentrate and stay connected to conversations.

2. Moderate or mid-stage dementia

Increased difficulty following conversations.

3. Severe or late-stage dementia

Complete inability to follow more complex instructions or multi-step thought process.

4. End-stage dementia

Inability to speak or respond verbally.

Connecting with your loved one and behavior management can be a challenging aspect of caring for a loved one with dementia. It's important to try various communication styles and find a way to communicate that works for both of you. Good communication can help reduce unwanted behaviors. Remember, behaviors are a form of communication, too! It's our job to try to understand.

1

Use nonverbal communication.

A calm/reassuring facial expression & posture can help your loved one feel more at ease. Avoid approaching from behind and try to meet them at eye level.

2

Avoid negative phrasing.

Instead of, "don't go over there" say, "stay here." Replace "don't do that" with "let's try this".

3

Use simple and clear language.

Speak slowly & distinctly with a calm, relaxed tone. Remember "A.R.E." don't argue, don't reason, don't explain.

4

Use contextual cues like gestures, props & pictures.

Offer your loved one a picture of a food item to help them communicate that they are hungry. Gesture toward the area you need them to go.

5

Validate their emotions.

If your loved one is feeling frustrated or depressed, acknowledge them by saying "you seem sad" or "this must be frustrating". Reassure that you are there to help.

6

Use distraction and redirection.

If your loved one becomes agitated, redirect them by suggesting a change of scenery or activity.

7

Establish a routine.

Eating meals or going for walks at the same time, etc. Routines can help your loved one feel secure and safe.

8

Use positive reinforcement.

Praise positive behaviors, like completing a task, and express appreciation for their efforts.

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