



# 8 Dementia Communication Tips

## **Approach the Person from the Front**

The person with dementia may have a loss of peripheral vision. Oftentimes, they have tunnel or binocular vision. Approaching from the front may reduce fear or prevent them from being startled.

## **When Possible, Look at the Person with Dementia**

Look at the person with dementia and not just their care partner. Include the person living with dementia in your conversation, especially when talking about them.

## **Speak Clearly, Calmly, and be Patient**

Allow the person time to understand information. It may take them longer to process or interpret what they hear. Use short, simple sentences and try using different words if the person is not responding. When asking questions, keep choices to a minimum. Ask yes/no questions, or limit choices to 2 or 3 options. When possible, use a quiet, non-distracting environment to talk.

## **Listen Closely**

Give plenty of encouragement and listen carefully as you look for clues about what they may be trying to communicate. They may seem confused or say something that doesn't make sense to you. If the person struggles to recall a word, suggest one. Be careful not to interrupt or finish their sentences. Try to go at their pace and work through the situation as best you can.

## **Avoid Arguing and Correcting**

Arguments with people with dementia cannot be won and will often end in frustration for everyone involved. Use disagreements as an opportunity to connect to emotions. Connect with the emotion that someone is seeking and then redirect.

## **Smile Warmly and Make Eye Contact**

Someone with dementia may find it difficult to understand what is being said, but may quickly interpret the look on your face, your tone and your body language. Use a friendly tone and give body cues that respect their personal space.

## **Respond to a Look of Distress**

At times, people with dementia may have forgotten where they live. If someone looks lost or distressed, offer to help by asking if their address is on something in their pocket or bag. Offer reassurance, encouragement and stay with them.

## **Watch for Signs of Change and offer Accordingly**

Every day can be different for some people with dementia. Each day can bring a change in their abilities. How you help someone may differ each time you interact with them. Use assistance tools like verbal cue, physical cues and lots of encouragement.