

Communicating with Someone Who has **Dementia**: Tips & Tools



Do you care for a loved one who has dementia? We know how hard being a caregiver can be. Dementia makes a person unable to remember and process new information. This might mean forgetting names or forgetting something you just said. This makes communicating with your loved one challenging. These communication tips can help you improve communication with your loved one.

1. Give short one-sentence responses.

Simple, short one-sentence answers will be easier for your loved one to register. Also, give them short, one-sentence instructions that are repeated the same way each time. This will help make it easier for them to complete the task.

2. Agree with your loved one no matter what.

Even if you know your loved one is wrong about something, agree with them. Don't argue or try to correct them. This could upset them or make them feel embarrassed. Also, try to change the subject afterward.

3. Use distraction if your loved one starts arguing.

When things escalate, use other activities to divert your loved one's attention. Try soothing activities like music, massage or knitting to help them feel calmer and improve the situation.

4. Respond to feelings rather than the words.

When your loved one says something mean or aggressive, it can be hurtful. But try not to focus on what was said. Focus on the feelings behind the words or actions. People with dementia often feel sad, hopeless or irritable about their condition. Keep this in mind and try to be patient.

5. Be warm and inviting with your loved one.

One way you can do this is to smile and be cheerful during conversations. It can be hard when your loved one says something mean, but try your best. When speaking, use a calm tone. Also, use relaxed body language.

Applying These Tips to Real-Life Scenarios

Here are a couple ways you can apply the above tips to real-life scenarios. When your loved one says:



- ❌ **Don't confront them with anger.**
Don't say anything like "I do everything for you and get no thank yous." Try your best to be patient with them, even if it's frustrating.
- ✅ **Do get at their level.**
Do what you can to help you make better eye contact. Sit if they are sitting, lean down if both of you are standing and you are taller.
- ✅ **Do keep your body language relaxed.**
Try to avoid crossing your arms. Try to avoid clenching your fist at your sides. This makes it look like you're angry
- ✅ **Do respond to feelings.**
Say something like "I'm sorry, this is a tough time." Try to show them you care and are trying to understand what they're feeling.

- ❌ **Don't argue.**
Don't try to explain who you are if they're wrong. Don't correct them or tell them "I'm your daughter." This will make them feel worse.
- ✅ **Do go along with it.**
Say something like "He'll be here soon."
- ✅ **Do use distraction.**
Ask your loved one if they would like to help you fold the laundry. You could also ask them if they would like a snack.

Helpful Resources

There are a couple of tools you or your loved one can use to help them with their dementia symptoms.

Explore the below tools:

Care Management Program

We know living with dementia can be hard on your loved one. We want your loved one and you, as their caregiver, to have the right tools to live a happy and healthy life. Our Care Management program can help you and your loved one learn more about dementia and help manage it.

Call Member Services at **1-833-230-2020** (TTY: **711**) if you would like to be part of the Care Management program.

BrainHQ®

BrainHQ provides the exercise your loved one's brain needs to be at its sharpest. Think of it as a personal gym where your loved one exercises their memory, attention, brain speed, people skills, navigation, intelligence and more! Your loved one can use BrainHQ on CareSource.BrainHQ.com. They can also download the BrainHQ app to their mobile device. This tool is free to your loved one as part of their CareSource plan benefits.

Call Member Services at **1-833-230-2020** (TTY: **711**) or your Care Manager to help get your loved one access to the BrainHQ tool.



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