

How to Communicate Better with Those Living With Dementia

When someone is living with dementia, they can reach a stage where their ability to communicate with people changes. This means that for those caring for someone with dementia the way they communicate must change also.

Someone with dementia may suddenly or gradually find that the way they talk and think is completely different or the power of speech may elude them altogether. As this process happens you as a carer must find ways to work with the challenge this presents.

If your loved one is the person with dementia and is receiving [live-in care](#) or [domiciliary care services](#) you can rest assured that their main carer will have received the appropriate training in how to care for and communicate with a person living with dementia. But if you are the primary carer you may find the following helpful.

How Dementia Inhibits Communication

You may notice certain traits and differences in speech which weren't there previously such as:

- Substituting words, sometimes because they can't remember the word they're looking for.
- Repeating questions or having the same conversation, often many times.
- Describing objects instead of using names.
- Losing a train of thought altogether.
- Reverting to another language, perhaps one they spoke a long time ago.

- Talking about the distant past as if it were the present.
- Speaking less often or not at all.

How You Can Help

First of all you must realise that a person with dementia is not deliberately being 'awkward' but is having real difficulty in organising their thoughts and finding words. However frustrating it is for you, it can be equally frustrating for them and for some it is upsetting or frightening when they realise they are losing their memory and the ability to communicate.

If you are a family member or friend caring for a person with dementia it can become too difficult especially if you are trying to cope with your own normal life as well. It could be beneficial for you and your loved one to consider in-home care.

Otherwise, read on for tips on how you can better communicate with a dementia sufferer.

- Keep it simple. Don't attempt to have long, convoluted conversations with them which can make them confused and distressed. Use short sentences, and as their dementia becomes worse, ask questions which require no more than a yes or no answer.
- Don't test their memory. Avoid saying things like 'do you remember...?' because this can upset them when they can't remember the thing you're talking about.
- Stay calm and relaxed if they're having difficulties communicating, and comfort them by telling them it's ok. Be patient and offer gentle encouragement.
- Avoid distractions like loud background noise which can make it hard for them to hear and concentrate.
- [Encourage them to socialise](#) and talk with other people. This could be neighbours, friends or family.

- When they resist your suggestions say about having dinner or bathing, offer choices to avoid conflict.

Above all, avoid criticising or belittling them and don't constantly correct their mistakes as they could become upset and confused. Take regular breaks to avoid becoming stressed.