

Communication Tips for Alzheimer's Disease

Alzheimer's disease gradually diminishes a person's ability to communicate. People with dementia have more difficulty expressing thoughts and emotions, as well as more trouble understanding others. Here are some tips to help in communication and understanding:

- Learn to create a 'kind voice' – slower, lower, smiling.
- Talk slowly and clearly.
- To orient the person and get his or her attention:
 - Call the person by name.
 - Always approach the person from the front so there are no surprises.
 - Tell the person who you are, even if you are the spouse or child.
- Ask one question at a time.
- Use short, simple words and sentences.
- Avoid using logic and reason.
- Avoid quizzing.
- Avoid asking, "Do you remember when...?"
- Do not take any negative communication personally.
- Be careful not to interrupt.
- Avoid criticizing, correcting and arguing.
- Let the person know you are listening and trying to understand what is being said.
 - Keep good eye contact.
 - Show the person that you care about what is being said.
- Patiently wait for a response as extra time may be required to process your request.
- Repeat information and questions. If the person doesn't respond, wait a moment. Then ask again.
- Focus on the feelings, not the facts.
 - Sometimes the emotions being expressed are more important than what is being said.
- Let the person think about and describe whatever he or she wants.
 - If the person uses the wrong word or cannot find a word, try guessing the right one.
 - If you don't understand what is being said, ask the person to point or gesture.

Tip resources: the Alzheimer's Association Web site www.alz.org

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