



Compassionate Communication

presented by the Alzheimer's Association

Communication of a person living with Alzheimer's or dementia will gradually decline as the disease progresses. Eventually, he or she will have more difficulty expressing thoughts and emotions. Challenges associated with communication can lead to frustration. However, these quick tips for compassionate communication can help.

Don't reason

Individual with dementia

"What doctor's appointment? There's nothing wrong with me."

Don't reason

"You've been seeing the doctor every three months for the past two years. It's written on the calendar and I told you about it yesterday and this morning."

DO offer a short explanation

"It's just a regular check-up"

OR accept blame

"I'm sorry I forgot to tell you"

Don't argue

Individual with dementia

"I didn't write this check. Someone at the bank is forging my signature."

Don't argue

"The bank wouldn't be forging your signature."

Respond to feelings

"That's a scary thought."

Offer reassurance

"I'll make sure they don't do that."

Don't ask questions of recent memory

Individual with dementia

"Hello, Susie. I see you've brought a friend with you."

Don't question memory

"Hi Mom. You remember Eric, don't you?" or "What did you do today?"

Offer short explanation

"Hi Mom. You look wonderful. This is Eric. We work together."

Don't remind about forgetting

Individual with dementia:

"Joe hasn't called for a long time. I hope he's okay."

Don't remind

"Joe called yesterday and you talked to him for 15 minutes."

Offer reassurance

"You really like talking to Joe, don't you?"

Redirect conversation

"Let's call him when we get back from our walk."

Don't Confront

Individual with dementia

"Nobody is going to make decisions for me. You can go now...and don't come back!"

Don't confront

"I'm not going anywhere, and you can't remember enough to make your own decisions."

Accept blame or respond to feelings

"I'm sorry this is a tough time."

Offer reassurance

"I love you and we are going to get through this together."

Redirect conversation

"You know what? Don has a new job and he's really excited about it."

Don't take it personally

Individual with dementia

"Who are you? Where is my husband?"

Don't take it personally

"What do you mean 'who is your husband'? I am!"

Go with the flow, reassure

"He'll be here for dinner."

Redirect conversation

"It's time to go for a walk, it's beautiful outside."

Repeat exactly

Individual with dementia

"I'm going to the store for a newspaper."

Don't repeat differently

"Please put your shoes on," then, "You will need to put your shoes on."

Repeat exactly

"Please put your shoes on," and again, "Please put your shoes on."

For more information, visit alz.org/commtips