

## Tips for Communicating with a Person with Dementia

- Set a positive mood for interaction.
  - Be aware of your attitude and body language.
  - Be pleasant, warm, affirming, and respectful.
- Get the person's attention.
  - Limit distractions and noise.
  - Address the person by name.
  - Identify yourself by name and relation.
  - Use nonverbal cues and touch to help keep the person focused.
  - If the person is seated, get down to his or her level and maintain eye contact.
- State your message clearly.
  - Use simple words and sentences.
  - Speak slowly, distinctly, and in a reassuring tone.
  - Refrain from raising your voice higher or louder; instead, pitch your voice lower.
- If you ask questions, use simple, answerable ones.
  - Ask one question at a time.
  - Refrain from asking open-ended questions or giving too many choices. Use visual prompts and cues to help clarify.
  - *Avoid asking questions that rely on short-term memory.*
- Listen with your ears, eyes, and heart.
  - Be patient in waiting for a reply.
  - If the person struggles, it's okay to gently suggest words.
  - Watch for nonverbal cues and body language and respond appropriately.
  - *Always strive to listen for the meaning and the feelings that underlie the words.*
- Respond with affection and reassurance.
  - People with dementia often feel confused, anxious, and unsure of themselves.
  - Stay focused on feelings and respond with verbal and physical expressions of comfort, support, and reassurance.
- Maintain your sense of humor, but never at the person's expense.
  - People with dementia tend to retain their social skills and are usually delighted to laugh along with you.
- *Be yourself and simply treat the person as another human being with dignity and worth. Their difficult behaviors are meant to give you a hard time; they mean that the person is having a hard time.*