

# Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU... CARING FOR OTHERS”

## For Better Communication – Listen Carefully

Communication is an art and a skill. It is not just about *talking*. Most of our actions are *unspoken* words that contribute to communication. Even the *tone* of our voice can mean more than the words that we actually say. Singing, dancing, hugging, holding, and other body actions are some of the ways we can communicate to people in our care who have lost the ability to understand spoken or written language.

It is important to let other people feel that they are respected, so treat them with dignity by not talking down to them. Take care to use a lower pitch of voice rather than a high pitch, which can sound like you were talking to a child.

### Listening: More Important than Talking

Have you ever *acted* like you were listening to someone who was talking, but in reality you were thinking about what you were going to answer the other person when it's your turn to talk or thinking about something else? Many of us are guilty of not *really* listening to what others say. Ways to improve listening skills:

- Try not to interrupt someone who is talking.
- Try to really hear their words and repeat back what they have said. This way, they know that you really *heard* was what they said. (Then they might also be more willing to listen to *you*.)



- Avoid being defensive.
- Remember to show respect to the other person—even if you do not agree with his actions or words.

Effective communication leads to mutual understanding. It helps both parties find a solution to a problem. This means that your goal is not to win an argument or prove that you are right, but to reach an understanding.

During this **National Family Caregivers Month**, we celebrate the valuable role that family caregivers play when

**Care Comes Home!**

Caregiver Action Network  
[www.caregiveraction.org](http://www.caregiveraction.org)

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## Being Understood

There are many challenges in communication. Sometimes, when you talk to a person in your care, you are not sure if they understand you. Sometimes, it also happens that you do not understand what they want to communicate. No matter how difficult these challenges are, do not give up trying to understand and being understood.

## Hearing Impairments

A person with hearing loss may appear like they are slow or uninterested. Check if they are using their hearing aid. To make communication effective:

- Be in a position where you are at eye level with the person. Make eye contact while *facing* the person.
- Allow the other person to see your face in the light so they can see your facial expression and lip movements.
- Avoid startling a person, approach him from the front and say who you are as you approach.
- Call them by name.
- Speak in simple language, using normal tone. Do not shout or use a high pitch.
- Ask one question at a time.
- Don't interrupt the person while he is talking.
- Use appropriate body language (pointing, nodding, etc) and facial expressions.
- Aside from their hearing aid, some people need their eyeglasses to see you better when communicating. Make sure they have these and that they are working properly.



## Signs of Hearing Loss

- ✓ The volume of the TV and radio is always very loud.
- ✓ You have to repeat yourself several times to be heard.
- ✓ They often misunderstand what you are saying.

Someone who has a serious hearing problem may withdraw from others because of embarrassment. Because of this they can become isolated and depressed. Consult a skilled audiologist who can suggest listening devices for hearing impairments.

## Taking Care of Yourself— Changing Behaviors One Step at a Time

Sometimes we are not aware that our behaviors can affect other people's behaviors. To be able to make changes in our interactions with others, we must try to improve on our behaviors one step at a time. Try these simple steps:

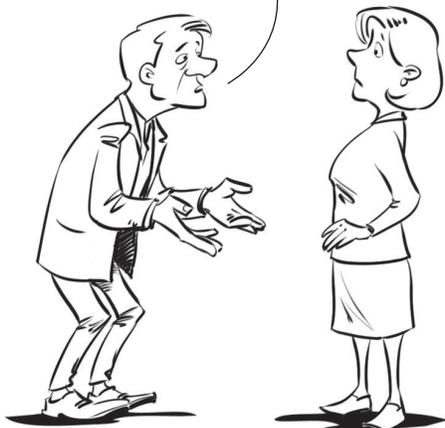
- Be generous with compliments. Do not wait for others to do significant accomplishments before you give them a positive feedback. Say something nice whenever you catch them doing a good job, no matter how small.
- Be generous with your smiles. A smile can be encouraging for someone who is struggling to do some task and can foster self-esteem.
- Do not allow yourself to nurture negative thoughts. Try this trick: Wear a rubber band on your wrist for a week. Snap it against your wrist whenever you catch yourself thinking unkind thoughts.
- Accept others for who they are and avoid being critical of them.



**Avoid Catching the Flu!** Flu season is here again. Be sure that both you and the person in your care do not catch it. Get the flu vaccination.

## Live Life Laughing!

"I understand what you are saying, but I just don't know what you mean."



## Inspiration

What you *do*, not say, often says it all.

## Don't Fall – Be Safe

Use footwear that is suitable for the weather. Sometimes the safest route is not always the fastest route. Play it safe and avoid steep hills, cracked sidewalks, and uneven surfaces.

## The Comfort of Home®

### Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

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Caregiver Series

available from...

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## SAFETY TIPS— Alzheimer's Disease Communication

People with Alzheimer's disease have their own reality, so do not try to reason with them. Remain calm to keep them calm. It is important to remember to respond to their emotions, and not to their behavior. To help them understand you:

- Make sure to have a quiet environment with minimal background noise.
- Call the person by name and remind them of your name.
- Point to an object and say, "Do you want a sweater?" instead of saying "Do you want *this*?"
- Avoid using expressions that may cause confusion. For example, do not say, "Jump into the shower." Instead, say, "Step into the shower."
- Communicate using body language. Let your hands do the talking. Show friendship by shaking hands, announce your presence by touching his shoulder, or point to a seat where you want him to sit.

