

5 DO NOT'S OF DEMENTIA CAREGIVING

Don't Tell Them They're Wrong About Something: To let the person save face, it's best not to contradict or correct them if they say something wrong. There's no good reason to do that. If they're alert enough, they'll realize they made a mistake and feel bad about it. Even if they don't understand their error, correcting them may embarrass or be otherwise unpleasant for them.

Don't Argue With the Person: It's never a good idea to argue with a person who has dementia. First of all, you can't win. And second, it will probably upset them or even make them angry. I learned a long time ago, when caring for my beloved Romanian soul mate, Ed, the best thing to do is simply change the subject -- preferably to something pleasant that will immediately catch their attention. That way, they'll likely forget all about the disagreement.

Don't Ask if They Remember Something: When talking with a person who has Alzheimer's, it's so tempting to ask them if they remember some person or event. "What did you have for lunch?" "What did you do this morning?" "Do you remember that we had candy bars when I visited last week?" "This is David. Do you remember him?" Of course they don't remember. Otherwise, they wouldn't have a diagnosis of dementia. It could embarrass or frustrate them if they don't remember. It's better to say, "I remember that we had candy the last time I was here. It was delicious."

Don't Remind the Person that a Loved One Is Dead: It's not uncommon for people with dementia to believe their deceased spouse, parent or other loved one is still alive. They may be confused or feel hurt that the person doesn't come to visit. If you inform them that the person is dead, they might not believe it and become angry with you. If they do believe you they'll probably be very upset by the news. What's more, they're likely to soon forget what you said and go back to believing their loved one is still alive. An exception to this guideline is if they *ask you* if the person is gone. Then it's wise to give them an honest answer, even if they will soon forget it, and then go on to some other topic.

Don't Bring up Other Topics That May Upset Them: There's no reason to bring up topics you know may upset your loved one. If you don't see eye-to-eye on politics, for example, don't even bring it up. It may just kindle an argument, which goes against the second guideline above. You won't prevail and it's just likely to cause them anger and/or frustration.