

10 Things a Person Living with Dementia Would Tell You If They Could

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Sometimes it helps to look at each situation from the perspective, or from out of the eyes of the person living with dementia. Here are ten communications tips that can help Alzheimer's caregivers improve their daily life.

Dotty's Ten Tips for Communicating with a Person Living with Dementia

1. You know what makes me feel safe, secure, and happy? A smile.
2. Did you ever consider this? When you get tense and uptight it makes me feel tense and uptight.
3. Instead of getting all bent out of shape when I do something that seems perfectly normal to me, and perfectly nutty to you, why not just smile at me? It will take the edge off the situation all the way around.¹
4. Please try to understand and remember it is my short term memory, my right now memory, that is gone -- don't talk so fast, or use so many words.
5. You know what I am going to say if you go off into long winded explanations on why we should do something? I am going to say No, because I can never be certain if you are asking me to do something I like, or drink a bottle of castor oil. So I'll just say No to be safe.
6. Slow down. And don't sneak up on me and start talking. Did I tell you I like smiles?
7. Make sure you have my attention before you start blabbering away. What is going to happen if you start blabbering away and you don't have my attention, or confuse me? I am going to say No - count on it.
8. My attention span and ability to pay attention are not as good as they once were, please make eye contact with me before you start talking. A nice smile always gets my attention. Did I mention that before?
9. Sometimes you talk to me like I am a child or an idiot. How would you like it if I did that to you? Go to your room and think about this. Don't come back and tell me you are sorry, I won't know what you are talking about. Just stop doing it and we will get along very well, and probably better than you think.
10. You talk too much -- instead try taking my hand and leading the way. I need a guide not a person to nag me all the time.