

Communicating with People Living with a Dementia

10 'Dos' and 10 'Don'ts'

There is no one right or wrong way of communicating with people experiencing a dementia. Communication is an individual process, and what works with one person may not work with another. However, generally, it is useful to practise communicating by following these dos and don'ts:

1. Do avoid confrontation, and don't confront the person with their mistakes
2. Do respond to feelings, and don't always take words and facts literally
3. Do focus on positives, and don't use controlling words
4. Do make clear and simple statements, and don't use questions beginning with "why?"
5. Do use the word "Let's..." and don't use reason and logic
6. Do give directions, one step at a time and don't talk in final outcomes
7. Do act as a person's memory, but don't ask them "Do you remember?"
8. Do interpret words and feelings, and don't argue back
9. Do talk **with**, and don't talk about people in the room
10. Do go along with people, and don't stop them from feeling in control.

Banned Sentences!

- You've just asked me that
- You don't go to work any more
- Can't you think of something to do
- You have forgotten again
- You said that before to me
- You can remember if you think harder
- Don't you remember
- Mrs X is difficult today
- She's been really today
- I've already told you
- Wait a minute
- You've just had your breakfast/lunch
- Stop doing that
- Don't we all look nice today

Helpful Sentences

- You seem anxious, worried etc
- I can never remember either
- You seem to miss your
- It can be hard to think of things
- Let's do this together
- I really need your help
- I'm feeling all lonely and lost too
- I could do with a friend too
- You must have really enjoyed your job
- You loved living in
- You were telling me about
- It's annoying when you forget things, isn't it?
- I'm sorry you're so angry
- Isn't it frustrating when you can't think of a word?
- Is it something to do with
- You seem worried about

Adapted from: Care to Communicate. Powell, J Hawker Publications 2000