

Hello!

These are excerpts (from different chapters) from my new book *Be in the Moment*, that will be on sale by the end of June on www.in-themoment.net The book will have chapters on communication, behaviors, things to do, taking care of yourself, laughter, improv, a granddaughter's perspective and so much more. Thanks - Karen

Speaking & Listening

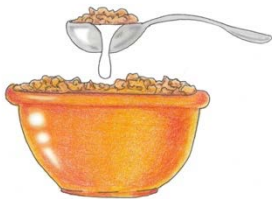
Do's and Don'ts

When you are trying to communicate with a person living with dementia then there are some things you should and should not do.

Do's

Limit distractions. If the TV is on, or the grandkids are running around, it may be hard for your loved one to filter out the noise and focus on what you are saying.

Be patient. Before you speak, take a moment. Know you might have to wait for their response. Find a way to be ok with that. Patience is a skill that will improve all parts of your life and caregiving allows daily practice. You might think you'll never be patient enough. You will be. One day your ability to be patient will just show up. If you find yourself getting frustrated. Give yourself a time out. Excuse yourself and come back in a moment or two.



Give options to the questions you ask like, "Would you like to wear the red or blue shirt?" "Would you like cereal or eggs?" You may need to add a physical cue to help show what you mean.

Be at eye level and make eye contact. This may sound simple, but I promise you, it has a big impact. When you are speaking with a person who is sitting, sit down yourself. You are saying with your actions, "I am concerned about you. You are my focus."

Be aware of your body language and the emotional tone of your voice. If your arms are crossed and you're tapping your foot, then they will "listen" to that more than your words.

Be specific. Instead of saying, "Could you sit over there?" Be more specific, "Mom, could you sit in that big red comfy chair?" Adding details helps your person understand their immediate surroundings and reduces uncertainty. They know exactly what is being asked and what they need to do.

Who are You? Do identify yourself. In case the person has forgotten your name.

Be aware of *their* body language and their emotional tone of voice. If a person's voice sounds sad but they say they are fine, then you know what they are feeling is more complicated than "fine". When they say I'm great, but you can see they're not.



Talk about one idea at a time. When you are helping a person with a poorly working Short Term Memory; break down the process you are helping them through into basic steps. Think about how many steps there are just to brushing your teeth. (I count at least eight).

Use the name the person is comfortable with now. If the person you are caring for is your mom or dad, then there may come a point when they do not respond to Mom or Dad. If their name is Richard and they were called Ricky as a teen that might be the best name to use now. Try to use the name they are connecting with. Also, (when they are having trouble with remembering names) introduce yourself often during the day but in a relaxed way. For example, if you have just left and returned to the room, "Hi Virginia, it's me Karen." It relieves the pressure of them trying to remember and removes the social stress of them forgetting.

Know your feelings. Where are you coming from? Are you annoyed, frustrated, or angry? When you are with a person living with dementia you will see your feelings reflected back in the person living with dementia. All of us (with or without dementia) pick up and hold the feelings of those around us. People living with dementia tend to do this even more. You might be upset at something completely unrelated and be unaware you are still feeling upset. However, if you are feeling you may see that upset-ness then in the person you are caring for. It helps to be aware of what you are emotionally bringing along, or you will find them "getting upset for no reason".

This needs repeating: prepare to be patient. Enter the conversation knowing that patience will be needed. What makes you react without patience? If you don't know what triggers your impatience, being a caregiver for any length of time will show you. Patience isn't turning yourself off or being an emotional stone. Patience is not repression. Knowing what behavior from you is productive now is what healthy patience feels like. Patience comes from seeing wide perspective. Give them the space to be themselves even if it is (in your opinion) inappropriate, unkind, or slow. Know that using your patience gives them the space to feel healthy. The more often they do the better it is for everyone.

Remember: Your experience with your LO is unique. You learn what they need and want from your interactions with them. They will tell you with their reactions to what you say and do. Pay attention. They will 'tell' you what they want and need.



What Sitting Says...

Sit down at eye level with the person.

This says several things to the person.

It makes it easier for the two of you to **understand one another**.

You are not hovering over the person,
and they are not looking up to you so, it says **we are equals**.

And most importantly when you sit
and when you let out a sigh and relax into the chair, it says,

"I have time for you."

- Dr. Al Power

Don'ts

Don't talk over or around the person. It can be easy to treat the person living with dementia as if they aren't there. Always include them as much as you can.

Don't argue with the PLWD. You will never win. If a person can't remember what was just said, then how will they ever be persuaded? They will get frustrated and then sad or mad, and so will you.

Don't interrupt. Give them a little extra time to get their thoughts together.

Don't ask questions they can't answer. "Why did you do that?"

"What did you have for breakfast?" If they can't recall the answer to a question, why ask it?

Try not to say "No", "Can't", "Should" or "Don't" to the person. (*See Improvisation Chapter and Yes and...*)

Don't correct if you understand. You know they always put sugar in their tea, and they ask for salt. No reason to say, "Oh Mom you meant to say sugar not salt." Just give them the sugar.

Don't say, "You remember..." We want our loved ones to remember but it's not up to them.

Don't assume they don't understand. Assume they do understand but look for confirmation.

Don't ask them for reasons or explanations. They don't have them.

Don't be abrupt. This can be hard. They might accidentally or on purpose hurt your feelings. We are used to reacting quickly when this happens. Under usual circumstances this may be the best thing to do: "Hey! Don't treat me like that!" – These are not those circumstances. If you are abrupt, it will only make things more emotional and confusing. Know a hurt or angry reaction is not in anyone's best interest and you will be less likely to be abrupt in the face of poor behavior.

Try not to use slang words or current words PLWD may not understand. Slang words like; dope, sick, OMG, bae, basic, lit...etc. (and yes, I had to look these up). Also, our lives revolve around technology, but it probably is not a part of our loved one's world. Tik Tok, Instagram, Twitter, and even phones, tablets or computers might be intimidating and bewildering for them. If you see a confused look from your Loved One, think about what you just said from their point of view.

Don't be impatient with yourself. This is slightly different from the "Do be patient" list item. This isn't an Olympic event or test. There are no perfect scores. If you have the goal of being as kind as you can-you are doing it right, even if everything is going wrong. If you are hard on yourself, you won't become a better caregiver you will just be grumpy and that will make what you are trying to do more difficult.

Stress Quick fixes

Learn to say No to doing more than you can do.

Learn to say Yes to help

Breathe.

Make one decision at a time.

Prioritize what HAS to be done.

Remember—This too shall pass.

Breathe.



Stress Long Term Solutions

Use Adult Day Services, a P.A.C.E. or a Respite Program

Delegate (Ask, Beg) some of your caregiving responsibilities to others.

Get your Zzzzzz's... Take catnaps.

SEEK divine comfort and confirmation.

Get EDUCATED.

Exercise. At least try to MOVE more.

Find relaxation methods that are right for you.

Eat a HEALTHY diet.

Join a caregiver SUPPORT group.

Realize that it is ok to LAUGH and have fun.

Pursue a HOBBY.

Indulge in special TREATS like a manicure or a date.

Hold a family meeting to DISTRIBUTE responsibilities.

INDULGE in a massage, aromatherapy, or yoga.

Visit with FRIENDS.

Keep a JOURNAL.

And it's still true, no matter how old you are, when you go out into the world
it is best to hold hands and stick together. - Robert Fulgham

Look, I really don't want to wax philosophic, but I will say that if you're alive, you got to flap
your arms and legs, you got to jump around a lot, you got to make a lot of noise,
because life is the very opposite of death. - Mel Brooks

When the heart grieves over what it has lost, the spirit rejoices over what it has left.
- Sufi Epigram

The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even
touched. They must be felt with the heart. - Helen Keller

Causes of Falls & What to Do

1. Poor fitting shoes and slippers. You can always return them if they do not fit correctly. Don't use the slip on type slipper.
2. Poor balance: make sure there isn't a physical cause like an ear infection.
3. Sitting too long. My Mom was always unsteady when she would first stand up or getting out of a car.
4. Lack of physical exercise or sitting too long
5. Impaired judgment: thinking you can walk up or down the stairs
6. Visual-Spatial Issues; seeing a linoleum floor as wet or a dark tile as a hole and trying to get around it. Watch how they walk and tape down rugs if they "go around" certain areas on the floor.
7. Clutter, anything on the floor; whether they trip on it or bend down trying to pick it up.
8. Boredom: walking around and looking for something to do
9. Need to use bathroom; keeping a schedule and checking on whether they need to go or not may help. Put up signs so they know where the bathrooms are.
10. Thirsty or Hungry; wanting to get something to eat or drink
11. Medication side effects; always ask the Dr and the Pharmacist about interaction and side effects
12. Unexpected noise or alarms. No alarms please.

One day Mom and I were at our local grocery store, and I had stopped to find my readers so I could see how much sugar is in a particular salad dressing. I looked up and saw that Mom had walked a little further down the aisle and was speaking with a girl in her 20's with beautiful long dreadlocks. I got close enough to hear her say, "You know I think if you buy better shampoo and conditioner, you can get those knots out." As mouth dropped open, the girl said "Okay. Thank you." And then my Mom turned and strutted back to our cart like she had just done a great service for the poor girl with the knotted tangly hair.