



Tool 3.3: Communication tips – talking to a person with dementia¹⁹

Do	Don't
Talk to the person in a tone of voice that conveys respect and dignity	Talk to the person in 'baby talk' or as if you are talking to a child
Keep your explanations short. Use clear and flexible language	Use complicated words or phrases and long sentences
Maintain eye contact by positioning yourself at the person's eye level	Glare at, or eyeball, the person you are talking to
Look directly at the person and ensure you have their attention before you speak. Always begin by identifying yourself and explain what it is you propose to do	Begin a task without explaining who you are or what you are about to do. Talk to the person without eye contact, such as while rummaging in a drawer to select clothing
Use visual cues whenever possible	Try to compete with a distracting environment
Be realistic in expectations	Provoke a catastrophic reaction through unrealistic expectations or by asking the person to do more than one task at a time
Observe and attempt to interpret the person's non-verbal communication	Disregard your own non-verbal communication
Paraphrase and use a calm, reassuring tone of voice	Disregard talk that may seem to be rambling
Speak slowly and say individual words clearly. Use strategies to reduce the effect of hearing impairment	Do not shout or talk too fast
Encourage talk about things they are familiar with	Interrupt unless it cannot be helped
Use touch, if appropriate	Attempt to touch or invade their personal space if they are showing signs of fear or aggression

¹⁹ http://www.dementiamanagementstrategy.com/Pages/ABC_of_Behaviour_Management/Communication_tips.aspx