



# Communication

**Communicating with People with Dementia**





# Overview

Dementia gradually destroys the areas of the brain responsible for sending and receiving messages, making communication difficult. There are guidelines, however, that you can follow to ensure effective communication with persons with dementia, even those who have severe cognitive impairments.

In this course, you will learn how to understand the person with dementia by knowing them as an individual and recognizing common speech patterns, how persons with dementia use behaviors for communicating discomfort, and the communication strategies you can employ to ensure the person receives your message clearly.





# Understanding the Person with Dementia

- Know the Person as an Individual
  - Not a disease
  - Not an attitude
  - Not a paycheck
- Know their story
- Know their routine
- Know what they value





# Stages

- Early Stage Patterns
  - Tongue-tied
  - Difficulty with short term memory
- Middle Stage Patterns
  - Neologisms (can't come up with word, make up words)
  - Word Salad (string words that do not make sense)
  - First in, Last Out (reverting to a native language)
  - Past Reality (Forget people, forget someone died, mix up relationships)
  - Time travel (May be living in the past then suddenly think it is another time in his/her lifetime.)
  - Verbal security Blankets: Holding something or holding on to someone provides comfort during communication.





# Stages continued

- Late Stages
  - Very little talk or no talking at all
    - My surprise you
  - Visual and hearing impairments
    - Need more light
    - Misunderstanding frequently





# Behavior is communication

- The meaning of some behaviors may be very obscure, especially if the person with dementia has difficulty with speech, hearing or seeing.
  - Example: I want to go home – is the resident uncomfortable in the current surroundings or is something else causing discomfort?
  - Example: A resident is always taking another resident's red sweater. Is it because she likes red or remembers having a red sweater?
  - Example: A man who walks away from an activity may be restless or hungry.





# Environments roll

- Create a warm and loving supportive environment
- Routines and rituals that breed familiarity
- Reduce background noise
- Temperature
- Maneuverability
- Number of people





# Internal factors

- Fatigue
- Frustration
- Fear and Confusion





# Other causes

- Pain
- Medication side effects
- Impaired vision
- Impaired hearing
- Acute illness
- Dehydration
- Depression



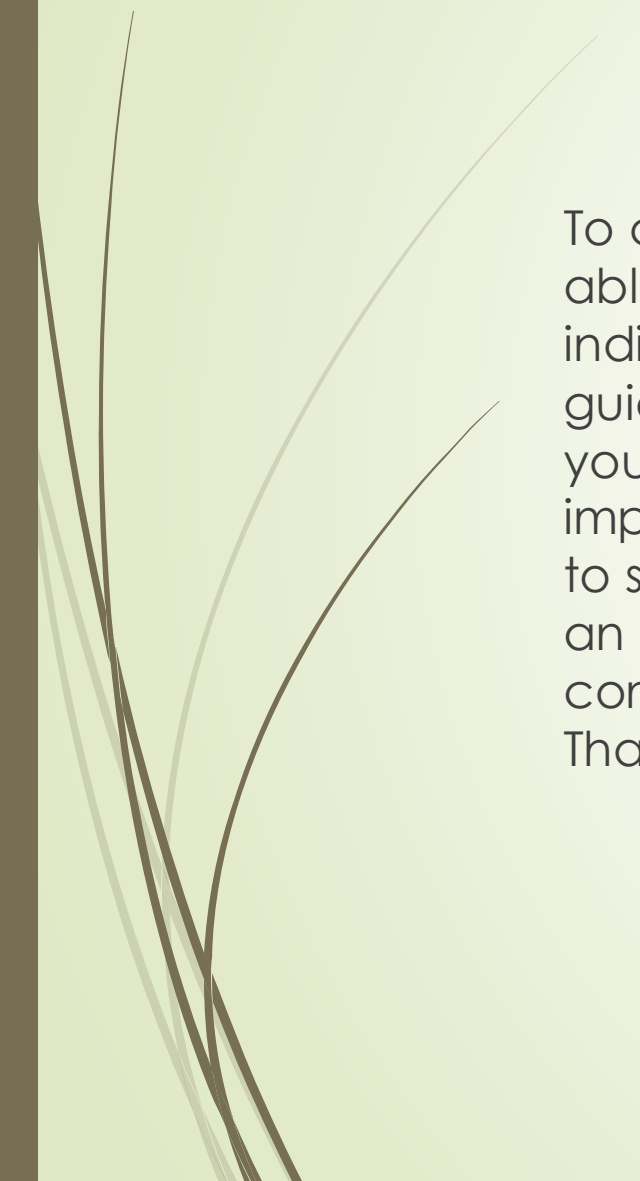


# Tips

- Never argue with a person with dementia
- Slow down and be patient
- Don't over explain
- State things in a positive manner
- Issue an invitation/have a conversation
- Use concrete terms
- Don't take insults personally and be aware of your own frustration levels
- Avoid open-ended questions/substitute statements for questions
- Use multisensory clues



# Summary



To communicate effectively with a person with dementia, they have to be able to understand what you are saying. This is often difficult for these individuals because of their impaired cognitive abilities. You can utilize certain guidelines to help ensure the person with dementia understands the message you are conveying. It first begins with common courtesy. One of the most important things you can do in communicating with a person with dementia is to slow down and be patient. Several other critical techniques include issuing an invitation and stating things in a positive manner. You can also nurture the communication skills of a person with dementia by building their confidence. That comes, in part, by asking for their help, their opinions, and their advice.