

Communicating with People with Dementia

COMMON CHALLENGES

WORD FINDING: knowing what the word is and not being able to remember it

DELAY IN RESPONDING: needing more time to process incoming information before being able to respond

WORD SALAD: stringing words together that have no meaning

REPEATING WORDS OR PHRASES: getting stuck and repeating the same thing over and over

TOPIC INSISTENCE: repetition of a topic



LANGUAGE SKILLS CAN VARY WITH EACH PERSON WHO HAS DEMENTIA

HELPFUL TIPS

MAKE EYE CONTACT: try to be at their level so they can focus on you

SHOW RESPECT: identify yourself to them

TOUCH: a hand on their arm gets attention or conveys interest

ALLOW RESPONSE TIME: don't rush or answer for them

OBSERVE BODY LANGUAGE: even challenging behaviors are a type of communication; try to determine what the person needs

LOOK FOR EMOTIONS BEHIND WORDS: emotions remain intact even when language fails

BE SENSITIVE ABOUT TELLING BAD NEWS: choose carefully if the truth or a therapeutic fib is the most respectful for the person



AS PEOPLE LOSE THE ABILITY TO USE NOUNS AND WORDS EFFECTIVELY, THEY BECOME MORE AWARE OF OTHERS' FEELINGS AND MOODS.

GENERAL REMINDERS

Reduce distractions

Use short sentences that include only one thought

Repeat information as needed

Never argue or confront

Do not use open-ended questions

Remain calm

Be patient with yourself

