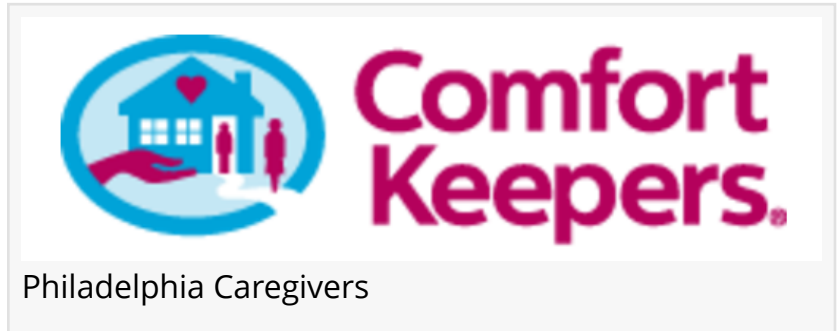


# Ways to Successfully and Kindly Communicate with Dementia Patients

*Dementia is a multi-natured disease that affects millions all over the world.*

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Dementia is a multi-natured disease that affects millions all over the world.

Dementia embodies a group of symptoms that affect memory, thinking, and social abilities severely enough to interfere with daily life and functioning.

Problems with Dementia begin with at least two different brain functions, such as memory loss and impaired judgment. This could also include the inability to perform daily activities such as cooking or paying bills. Dementia also can diminish a person's [communication skills](#) gradually.

## Difficulty with Communication: Look for Clues

When looking for changes in communication skills, look for ones that are aligned with the symptoms of Dementia. Examples of symptoms of Dementia are:

- Use familiar words often
- Inventing new words to describe everyday things
- Losing train of thought often
- Reverting to a native language
- Having difficulty organizing concepts in a logical way
- Speaking less often

## Communication During the Different Stages of [Alzheimer's and Dementia](#):

### What to Expect

In the mild and early stages of Dementia, an individual is still able to engage in daily dialogue, deep conversations, and social activities. However, the person may unknowingly repeat stories, have difficulty finding the correct word, or feel overwhelmed by excessive verbal stimulation.

The middle stage is usually the longest and can last for several years. As the disease progresses, the person will have greater difficulty communicating and will require a lot of direct care.

The severe stage can last several weeks to several months. As the disease advances, the person may rely on nonverbal communication. This could be through eye contact or body language. Around-the-clock care is usually required at this juncture.

## The Best Ways to Communicate

Dealing with Dementia is a struggle. People that have Dementia usually have more difficulty expressing thoughts and emotions than a person without Dementia.

Here are some ways on how to help you be successful at communicating with Dementia Patients:

### Before You Speak

- Stay composed. Take a moment to calm yourself before engaging in a conversation.
- Remain focused. Consider what you are going to talk about and stick to that topic. Try always to be positive. Show your positivity in your voice and body language.
- Be the primary focus. Make sure you grab the person's full attention, and that they can see you clearly. Try to maintain consistent eye contact and remain at their eye level.
- Minimize distractions. Turn off the TV or radio to reduce background noise.
- Match your body language to your words. Make sure that your body language/facial expressions match with what you are saying.
- Never stand too close. Instead, respect the person's personal space, for this could be intimidating. Allow the person to feel as though they are in control of the situation.
- Use physical contact. Show that you care by holding the individual's hand or putting your arm around him or her.

### How to Speak Correctly

- Make sure you Speak calmly and clearly. Be aware of how fast you are talking and your clarity in words. Be sure to use a gentle and relaxed tone. A lower pitch is better to use since it is seen as more calming.
- Speak at a slower pace (slightly). Allow time in between sentences for the person to process the information and to respond at their own pace.
- Include the person in conversations with others. This will reduce feelings of exclusion and isolation.
- Avoid confusing and vague statements. If you tell the person to "hop in the shower," he or she may take your instructions literally. Describe the action in a more direct way to make your directions more clear: "Please come here. Your shower is ready." Instead of using unclear antecedents such as "it" or "that," name the object or place directly. Rather than "Here it is," say "Your coat is right here."
- Repeat questions or information as necessary. If the person does not respond quickly, wait a moment for them to think. -Then ask the person one more time.
- Turn your questions into answers. Provide the patient with the solution rather than an open question. For example, say "Your lunch is right here," instead of asking, "Are you ready for your lunch?"
- Turn negative things into positive things. Instead of saying, "Don't go there," say, "Let's go here."
- Try to laugh with them about mistakes and confusions. Humor and fun can bring you closer together with the person and relieve any tensions.

### What to Say to the patient

- Clearly Identify Yourself. Advance the conversation from a frontal view and maintain good eye contact.
- Call the person by name. It helps keep the person in reality and grabs their attention.
- Use short, simple words and sentences. Lengthy stories or requests can be overwhelming.
- Offer a guess. If the person can't find the correct word to use or uses the wrong word, try helping them guess the right one.
- Avoid asking too many direct questions. People with dementia often become frustrated if they can't find the answer. If you have to, ask questions, ask only one question at a time and put them in a way that allows for only a 'yes' or 'no' answer.

-Try not to ask the person to make difficult decisions. Try always to give the person a choice. Too many options can be frustrating.

-Avoid criticizing or correcting. Don't discourage the person's effort by telling them that they are incorrect. Instead, try to understand what they are trying to say, and encourage him or her to always correspond their thoughts.

Avoid arguing. If the person says something you don't necessarily agree with, try to let it go. Fighting makes things worse. It will also heighten the level of agitation for the person dealing with dementia.

#### How to Listen

-Always try to Listen attentively to what the person is trying to communicate.

-Try to be caring and supportive. The person may need more time to process thoughts in conversation. Let the person know you are listening to them.

-Pay attention to hints. If the individual has difficulty finding the right word to use or finishing a sentence, maybe ask them to try to finish it in a different way.

-Remain sympathetic while listening. If the individual is feeling unhappy, let them express their feelings without dismissing them right away. This will show that how much you care.

-After listening, get confirmation. When you have not fully understood what they are saying, tell the person what you have comprehended and make sure you are correct. You may have to repeat yourself to clarify.

-Always use the best judgment. Some people will not remember personal things, such as medical history, family, or friends. You will need to act appropriately in these situations. For example, they may say that they have just showered when you know they haven't yet.

#### Always Keep Corresponding, and Be Respectful

Remember to always treat a Dementia patient with respect and dignity. Don't talk about them as if they are not there, or speak to them as you would to a young child. Remaining patient is crucial.

Always offer them ongoing comfort and reassurance, too. If he or she is having trouble communicating, let the person know that it is alright. Try to give support to the person to continue to explain his or her thoughts, no matter what.

Comfort Keepers provides exceptional Dementia care and many other services for you or your loved one. Our caregivers are locally based and well trained to help any situation. To contact one of our caregivers call (877) 698-9394.

#### About Comfort Keepers Philadelphia:

Owners Michele Berman and her brother, Marc Reisman, took over Huntington Valley Comfort Keepers in 2000, when their father, Richard Reisman, was diagnosed with lung cancer and became increasingly ill. They experienced firsthand the care and comfort provided by Comfort Keepers. In fact, Richard Reisman originally started the business when his mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's. At that time, there weren't many options for those in need of additional support and quality care. Today, the owners are proud to carry on the legacy of their father, but they are even more proud of the difference Comfort Keepers is making to those who need their help the most.

To find out more about Comfort Keepers' commitment to excellence, please call 215.885.9140.

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