

Friends/family members/neighbors

Tips for visiting people living with dementia

Announce who you are. ("Hi Grandma, it's Anna." "Hi Joe, it's your neighbor, Sarah.")

Approach from the front. (Peripheral vision may be decreased. It's sometimes fine to start speaking before being seen if your voice is likely to be more familiar than your appearance.)

Avoid asking questions, especially those requiring retention of recent facts. "I don't know" is a clue you are asking too many questions.

Rephrase to statements starting with "I suppose...it seems...it looks like...I wonder..." to encourage responses without demanding them.

Don't contradict, correct, confront, or criticize.

Talk about their areas of interest and expertise, using familiar words and favorite old stories they may pick up on.

Enhance well-being by going along with what makes sense to them rather than using logic to convince them otherwise.

Be aware of vision and hearing impairments.

Consider holding hands with their hand on top to increase calmness.

Avoid pronouns (he, she, they) and refer to people by name.

Speak clearly, slowly, and naturally with a calm tone.

Use nonverbal cues and gestures.

Smile and maintain eye contact.

Avoid bad news.

Avoid distractions (noise and glare).

Talk about one thing at a time.

Listen for the message behind the words, responding to their feelings.

If non-verbal and agitated, look for basic physical concerns (pain, hunger, thirst, toileting needs, feeling cold or hot etc.)

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Listen more than talk. If you aren't understanding every word, try saying back the few words you did understand to keep conversation flowing.

Embrace a therapeutic silence. It's ok not to fill every moment with words.

Recognize that there will be good days and bad days.

Be patient and kind with the goal of preserving dignity.

Aim to provide moments of joy and contentment (with spiritual and emotional connections).

Offer to take a walk with them if able.

Listen to music or watch a show together that they'd enjoy.

Read out loud, sing, and/or pray together.

Reminisce while looking at old pictures--without quizzing.

Leave on a positive note (feelings linger after facts of experiences may be lost).

If they are engaged with someone else, consider fading into the background and leaving (and subtly dropping back in with your next visit) rather than interrupting the moment with your goodbye.

Learn more about dementia— www.dementiatogether.org

Feelings become increasingly more important than facts.

"Just because facts aren't recalled doesn't mean moments aren't significant." -Cyndy Luzinski