

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

Communicating with the Person with Alzheimer's

Tips for success:

- 1. Make eye contact.** Always approach them face-to-face and make eye contact. It is vital that they actually see you and that their attention is on you. Use their name to get their attention.
- 2. Be at their level.** If they are seated or are shorter than you, bend down to get to their level. Do not stand or hover over them - it is intimidating and scary and will not yield good results.
- 3. Tell them what you are going to do before you do it.** Especially if you are going to touch them. They need to know what you are going to do so it doesn't come across as grabbing them.
- 4. Speak calmly.** They will mirror back to you your attitude. Remember not to sound or be angry or agitated or you will receive anger or agitation. They will be able to sense your attitude, even if you try to hide it.
- 5. Speak slowly.** Speak at one half your normal speed when you talk to them. Take a breath between each sentence and give them time to process what you have said. Count silently to 15 to allow enough time for them to process what you said.
- 6. Speak in short sentences.** Speak in short sentences with only one idea at a time. Usually they can only focus on one idea at a time. Repeat sentences the same way a couple of times. Use names, not pronouns. For example: John went to the store. John is getting groceries. Say "Here is your hat", not "here it is". Avoid confusing statements like "hop in".
- 7. Only ask one question at a time.** Let them answer it before you ask another question. You can ask who, what, when and where, but not WHY. Why is too complicated.
- 8. Don't say "remember".** Many times they will not be able to do so and you are just frustrating them by pointing it out. You may stimulate anger that you do not want to deal with. When with other people, say "This is Mary, your neighbor" not "Do you remember Mary?"
- 9. Turn negatives into positives.** For example, say "let's go here" rather than "Don't go there". **Avoid the words don't, can't, no and stop.** Be inclusive and don't talk down to them as if they were a child. Respect the fact that they are an adult, and treat them as such.
- 10. DO NOT ARGUE WITH THEM! - EVER!** It gets you nowhere. Instead, validate their feelings by saying, "I see that you are angry, (sad, upset, confused, etc.). It lets them know that they are not alone. Then, direct them into another thought. For example, "It sounds like you miss your wife (husband, father, son, etc.). You love them very much don't you? Tell me about them." Ask them about one of their favorite stories about that person.