



Nurse and other Direct Care Provider

Tips for interacting with people living with dementia

Do not contradict, correct, criticize, or re-orient (unless the people with dementia want re-orienting.)

Enhance well-being by going along with their reality rather than insisting they re-orient to yours. (Their reality is the best coping mechanism they have to put familiar context to the emotions they are experiencing).

Make the people with dementia the expert-talk about what they know well, areas of interest, expertise, and passion to establish rapport and promote contentedness and cooperation. “I heard I could get good fishing advice from you.”

Eliminate complicated explanations, instructions, and questioning that could only cause increased anxiety and agitation. Instead, give one simple instruction at a time.

Note *key information* in the chart, on the patient communication board, and in conversation with **ALL providers** to aid in care with minimal anxiety. Key information includes: area of interest, name of trusted person, *best answer* for repeated questions to explain care partner’s absence, strangers’ presence, and reason for hospitalization (may be able to use pre-dementia health condition to gain cooperation).

Try to resolve misunderstandings by **agreeing** (“that shouldn’t have happened,”) **apologizing** (“I’m so sorry that happened,”) **joining** (“Let’s see how we can find a solution/fix this.”), and then **distracting**.

Include care partner/family member when giving instructions and assessing cognitive and functional status.

Approach from the front, so as not to startle people with dementia who might have hearing loss, severe peripheral vision impairment, and/or lack of awareness for the need of nursing care.

Continually communicate with care partners and provide them with **community resource information**: Alzheimer’s Association (970-472-9798), Larimer County Office on Aging (970-498-7750), and **advance directives** assistance (970-495-8560-Aspen Club or 970-820-4097-Seasons Club).

Aim for decreasing/eliminating anxiety and avoiding agitation without resorting to the use of medication. Look for the underlying cause of agitation, and assess their need for rest, food, drink, pain relief, bathroom, change in lighting, temperature, or noise levels in the room. Use **palm to palm calming hand holding** without crowding the person if helpful and go back to the first two points ☺ ...don’t contradict...go along with their reality.

Realize that dementia symptoms may not just affect memory. Language abilities, judgment, perception, spatial abilities, visual abilities, behavior, and personality can also be altered with dementia related diagnoses.

End interaction on a **positive note** when possible since feelings linger even when the facts of an experience never enter the mind.