



Tips for Interacting with Persons with Alzheimer's Disease and Other Dementias

1. Use a gentle approach when dealing with the person, i.e., Be calm and reassuring, speak slowly and clearly, use simple words.
2. Always remember that the person is dealing with Confusion, Irritation, Anxiety, Depression, Suspicion, or Paranoia.
3. Always address the person by his/her name to get his/her attention. Maintain eye contact while you are speaking. Nonverbal gestures may also help.
4. Ask only one question at a time and give the person time to respond. Remember that it takes time for them to process information, so be patient with them.
5. Approach the person from the front in a gentle manner. If you approach him/her from behind or touch him/her unexpectedly it may startle or upset them.
6. Always allow extra time when performing an activity. Rushing the person will only increase his/her confusion.
7. **Be good-natured and use humor whenever possible**, though not at the person's expense.
8. Always **remember** the importance of compassion and affection. Sometimes a gentle touch, hug, or praise will get the person to respond when all else fails.
9. **Your calm and reassuring tone of voice is as important as the words you say.**
10. Likewise, the person with dementia will express their feelings in their tone of voice. You will be able to tell if they are fine or upset.
11. **Provide lots of verbal reassurance that everything is okay.**
12. Avoid using the word no. You may even say yes to demands that you can distract them from later.
13. Provide activities that will distract the person. Give them a chore to do like folding towels, counting cards, raking leaves, or watching a calm television show.
14. Give the person objects that have a calming effect such as a stuffed animal, fuzzy blanket, or a cup of tea. Soft music also helps.

15. If the person misplaces or hides items look for the items together, keep them involved. If they don't want you looking in certain places then wait until they are occupied with another task so you can do so.
16. Keep duplicates of items that the person tends to hide. For example have 2 or 3 purses or wallets on hand to substitute for the one that's missing. Put a small amount of money or pictures in it to reassure them.
17. If the person becomes suspicious try not to take it personally. Remember that this is not behavior that the person can control. Please do not confront or argue with the person because this can be extremely detrimental.
18. **Ways to deal with suspicion:**
 - A. Remember first that the person is not intentionally treating you this way.
 - B. Try to distract the person from their focus or suspiciousness.
 - C. Respond with sympathy and reassurance to the feeling of loss and confusion.
 - D. If suspicion focuses on stealing, you may help the person search for the lost item.
19. Tell them that the item is here somewhere.
20. When delusions or hallucinations occur, react calmly so as not to further upset the person. Remember that a hallucination is very real for the person who is experiencing it. Do not be confrontational or argue about their experience. At the same time you should not play along with a delusion or hallucination. You don't need to agree or disagree- just listen and give a non-committal answer. For example, you can say "I don't hear the voices that you hear but it must be frightening to you." Sometimes a distraction or gentle touch will steer them away from a delusion.
21. When a confused person finds himself/herself in a new place he/she may feel that he/she is lost, that you cannot find him/her, or he/she is not supposed to be where they are. Reassure the person about where they are, why they are there, and when they will be going home. For example, you can say, "We are at the doctor's office and we will go home after the doctor sees you."
22. **Always make the person feel welcome by talking directly to him/her or with a gentle touch.**
23. Back away from physical aggression and remove yourself from the room until the person calms down.
24. Minimize restraining the person, for example, by holding a person's hands or arms. This may only increase the person's frustration.

25. If you are concerned about aggression, remove heavy or sharp objects from the area. For example: remove all sharp knives, scissors etc. from their drawers and put them in an out-of-reach location.
26. Always respond calmly if a person becomes angry. DO NOT respond with anger. Remove the person from the situation or remove the upsetting stimulus. Look for the event that started the reaction, so that you can prevent or minimize a recurrence. Distraction, such as a walk together to burn off steam, is helpful.
27. Sudden noises or moments may startle a person and quickly lead to anger. Keep confusion, noise, and extra stimulation down to a minimum.
28. Focus on ways to reassure the person. Take their concerns seriously because they truly believe that these concerns are real.
29. Distract the person with an enjoyable activity such as looking at family photos or telling stories of their past. It generally works best if you join the person's world and try to understand where they are coming from.
30. Always remember, the person with Alzheimer's or other dementia is a person first and foremost. Like you, the person needs a lot of love, dignity, and respect.