



### Talk about the good old days

- Avoid asking questions that rely on short-term memory, such as asking the person what they had for lunch.
- Remembering the past is often a soothing and affirming activity. Allow your loved one to talk about their past. You may use old photos or objects to start the topic.



### Use humour and laughter

- Use humour whenever possible, but not at the person's expense.
- People with dementia tend to retain their social skills and are usually happy to laugh along with you.



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## Communication Strategies for Dementia

The **a** **b** **c**'s of Health

 Changi  
General Hospital

## Communicating with Person with Dementia

Being able to communicate effectively with your loved one with dementia can make caregiving less stressful.

Good communication skills may also help in preventing misunderstandings and reduce resistance or anger episodes by your loved one.

Difficulties with language are common for the persons with dementia: -

- They may not find the right words and substitute an incorrect word, or may not find any word at all.
- There may come a time when they can hardly communicate accurately or successfully through language.



## Tips on Improving Your Communication



### Watch your non-verbal cues

- Non-verbal communication is particularly important when a person with dementia is losing their language skills.
- Body language, tone and pitch of voice play a more important role in conveying your message than the words used.



### Get the person's attention and minimise distractions

- Approach the person with full view to avoid scaring your loved one.
- Ensure he/she is able to hear, see or feel you. Consider hearing and visual aids if your loved one has vision or hearing problems.
- Address your loved one by name and identify yourself by name and/or relations.
- Minimise distractions. Turn off the radio or TV or move to a quieter place.



### Convey clear messages

- Use simple words and short sentences.
- Repeat your message/question or rephrase it in a different way if your loved one cannot understand you.
- Avoid short forms and use terms and words that your loved one is familiar with.
- Use visual cues, eg. show the person the clothes they can choose from.



### Ask simple questions

- Ask only one question at a time.
- Ask close-ended questions so that the person just needs to answer 'yes' or 'no'.
- If you are asking them to choose, limit options to two.

Eg. Instead of "What do you want to drink?"

Ask **"Do you want coffee or tea?"**

It will be better if you can show your loved one the choices to choose from.



### Listen with your ears, eyes and heart

- Be patient when waiting for your loved one's reply.
- If he/she is struggling for an answer, you can help by suggesting words.
- Watch for non-verbal cues and body language and respond accordingly.



### Respond with reassurance

- Try not to tell your loved one they are wrong or incompetent to do certain tasks.
- Respond with verbal and physical expressions of reassurance eg. praise, touch, hugging will allow your loved one to feel loved and safe.