

Five Tips for Improving Communication

1 Use "Clear Speech"

Clear Speech is when the speaker attempts to express every word and sentence in a precise, accurate, fully formed manner.

CLEAR SPEECH IS

1. Naturally slower and louder
2. Lively with a full range of intonation and stress on key words
3. Characterized by pauses between phrases and sentences

CLEAR SPEECH EXAMPLE 1:

Say the sentence: *"The ship left on a two week cruise"*

In normal conversation the sentence would probably sound more like this: *"The shipleft ona twoweecruise"*

In Clear Speech style the sentence would be: *"The ship left on a two week cruise"*

CLEAR SPEECH EXAMPLE 2:

Target Sentence: *"We were looking for a white truck to buy."*

In conversation: *"We're lookinfor awhitetruck tabuy."*

Clear Speech: *"We were looking for a white truck to buy."*

2 Simplify - Vocabulary, Sentences, Explanations

Complex sentences tend to be longer and harder to remember.

People have to hold the sentence in mind while trying to make sense of it.

TOO LONG

"Let's try this. Why don't you come with me and we'll see about that cushion, It's almost time for lunch so we should hurry if we want to get it done today."

BETTER

"I would like to fix your cushion" (and touch cushion)

Five Tips for Improving Communication - Continued

3 Use Choice Questions (but not all the time...)

Open-ended questions require recall of specific information or thinking of a series of ideas. Use questions that offer choices, **but no more than two**.

OPEN-ENDED

What do you want to drink?

CHOICE

Would you like coffee or tea?

OPEN-ENDED

What do you want to wear?

CHOICE

Would you like this shirt or this one? (holding both up)

4 Talk About Things You Can See, Touch, Feel

Even in the middle to later stages, many people with dementia will take an interest in pictures and objects that remind them of the past.

Work with the person to design memory books/wallets and to use reminiscence. Recall favourite trips and vacations, family memories and precious moments.

5 Validate Feelings and Beliefs - "Connect versus Correct"

People with middle stage dementia are often confused about time, place and situation.

They may make statements that are untrue - ie: claim that they are going home when they are living in a long-term care setting; claim that someone has stolen money or a personal item from them.

People with dementia cannot recall the specific nature of the mistake and will not recall the details of the correction.

Repeatedly correcting the patient creates negative feelings which may result in agitation.

Rather than correcting or arguing with the person, validate their beliefs, regardless of their accuracy.

Some validation techniques include: eye contact, positive tone of voice and "mirroring" or repeating the persons' words, facial expressions and general tone.

When the 85-year-old woman with dementia says she will be having lunch with her grandmother, validate her by saying something like "You seem happy about that."