

# Communication with a Person Living with IDD and Dementia



Questions? Contact: [CDDERTraining@umassmed.edu](mailto:CDDERTraining@umassmed.edu)

## Audience

**Staff and Paid Caregivers**

## Learning Objectives

- Understand ways of communicating and their importance in caregiving
- Understand how communication changes as dementia progresses.
- Using communication strategies to create a good quality of life

## Action Strategies for the Trainer

### **Introduce the course.**

*We're going to watch a video that discusses how communication will change as dementia progresses. You'll also learn practical steps to make communication easier for you and the person you care for, as well as how to use various communication tools to ensure that the person has a good quality of life.*

*After each section, there are review questions, and we'll pause to discuss these and any questions you have so far.*

### **Play Section 1. Pause after the self-checks.**

*Are there any questions? Do terms need to be clarified?*

*Have you noticed communication changes in the way a person you care?*

*What might the person's behavior be trying to tell you?*

If you have staff from different programs, remind them not to give names or details that would violate confidentiality.

### **Introduce Section 2:**

*This next section will talk about what to expect communication to look like as the person's dementia progresses.*

### **Play Section 2. Pause after the self-checks.**

*Are there any questions?*

*Does anyone want to share communication you may have seen? Follow up with:*

- *What strategies do you use to make communication easier?*
- *Talk about what you might try to make communication easier:*
  - *Think about the environment, schedules, using your voice and body language, speaking slowly, using simple sentences and short questions, using visual cues.*

**Introduce Section 3:**

*A caregiver’s role is to create a meaningful life for the person. That includes facilitating connections between the person with dementia and others, including their peers and the community. In this section we’ll review some strategies to foster connections.*

**Play Section 3.**

*Use the “Think About It” questions in the course to guide a group discussion.*

- What are the person’s interests - now or had in the past? What has made them excited or happy?
- What activities did they enjoy doing? Are there any that they did with their housemates or peers?
- Are there special foods that are meaningful to them? What about music?
- Using some of these ideas, think of activities that you could share with the person you care for that could help you create a meaningful connection with you or their peers.

**Discussion and Activities**

Activities for further discussion and understanding.

**Activity One**

Practice with helping the person with dementia complete a task:

- Think of a task that someone is having difficulty doing. For example, tooth brushing, dressing, setting the table.
  - How would you break down the task into smaller steps?
  - How do you communicate those steps?
    - Consider body language and tone of voice.
    - Word choice
    - Simple questions with short answers
  - What visual or gestural prompts might you use?

**Activity Two**

What are some steps you would take to create a Life Story album for the person you serve?

- Ask family and friends for photos of the person and of important people in their life.
- Make sure you include labels or information about who is in the photos and where or when they’re from.
- Include photos of the person that your residence may have.

**Wrap up**

Any other questions or comments

**Resources**

- [NTG screening tool](#)
- [Dementia Screening and Diagnosis](#)
- [MassOptions](#)
- [After the Diagnosis](#)
- [Creating a Memory Café](#)
- [End of Life Planning](#)
- [MOLST training webinar](#)
- [Aging Information and Webinars](#)
- [DisDAT Comparison Tool](#)
- [Massachusetts Department of Developmental Service, Family Support Center](#)
- [Mass Council on Aging](#)
- [Alzheimer's Association](#)
- [Your local Aging and Disability Resource Consortia agency \(ADRC\)](#)

*NB: Web Links are current as of July 2023*