

Communication with a Person Living with IDD and Dementia



Questions? Contact: CDDERTraining@umassmed.edu

Audience

Family 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 your family member's dementia progresses. You'll also learn practical steps to make communication easier, as well as how to use various communication tools to ensure that your family member 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 your family member?

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

Remind people to respect participants' privacy and maintain 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 home environment, schedules, how to use your voice and body language, speaking slowly, using simple sentences and short questions, using visual cues.*

Introduce Section 3:

An important role as a caregiver is to create a meaningful life for your loved one. That includes facilitating connections between them and others, including their friends, other family members, and their 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 with you or friends and family?
- Are there special foods that are meaningful to them? What about music?
- Using some of these ideas, think of activities that you could share that would help you create meaningful connections with you or others.

Discussion and Activities

Activities for further discussion and understanding.

Activity One

Practice with helping your family member complete a task:

- Think of a task that they're 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?

- Gather photos from family and friends – these can be photos of the person and of important people and places in their life.
- Make sure you include labels or information about who is in the photos and where or when they're from.

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