Tips for Communicating With a Loved One With Alzheimer’s

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Communicating Effectively With an Alzheimer's Patient

Alzheimer's patients will have difficulties with communication early on. Stories may be repeated over and over again, or they may find it hard to find the words to express themselves. As the disease goes into its later stages, these other changes will be evident to their caregivers:

- Repeating familiar words.
- Reverting to their native language.
- Having trouble with speaking words in a logical order.
- Using new words to describe everyday objects.

Alzheimer's disease causes the people afflicted to have more difficulty with expressing thoughts and emotions. In some cases, patients with Alzheimer's cannot understand others when they are spoken to. The families need to know that there is a special way to communicate with their loved ones with this disease.

Helping the Person with Alzheimer's Communicate

Here are some ways to help a person with Alzheimer's communicate:

- **Gain his attention.** Approach him by the front, tell him your name, and call him by name.
- **Offer support and be patient.** Listen and convey understanding. Show you care and do not interrupt.
- **Maintain eye contact.** Since an Alzheimer's patient can read a lot in facial expressions and body language, you should maintain a calm demeanor and good eye contact to let them know you are listening.
- **Speak naturally.** Speak clearly and concisely. You shouldn't speak loudly or too fast/slow. Speak simply and use familiar words.
- **Adapt to your listener.** Attempt to use the same gestures and words your loved one is trying to communicate with. This will make it easier for him to understand you.
- **Offer comfort and reassurance.** If your loved one is having difficulty communicating, just be reassuring and encourage them gently about continuing their thoughts.
- **Encourage unspoken communication.** Ask the person to point or gesture if he is having trouble expressing something verbally.
- **Limit distractions.** Having the television on or being around a noisy crowd can be confusing for Alzheimer's patients, especially in communicating effectively. It is better to find a quiet place to try to talk.
- **Focus his feelings.** It is important to find the true emotion behind the words being expressed. It can be identified by the tone of voice or the actions being performed.
- **Turn questions into answers.** Try not to ask questions to get the person directed the right way. Say, "Here is the bathroom," rather than "Do you need to go to the bathroom?"
- **Turn negatives into positives.** People with Alzheimer's don't respond well to negative statements like, "Don't go in there." By being positive and saying, "Let's go over here," it is easier to get their cooperation.
- **Rephrase rather than repeat.** Rather than repeating something that the loved one cannot comprehend,

you may just need to rephrase it. Say it in a more simple way that he may understand.

Conclusion

It is very important to remember the value of non-verbal communication. Touch, gestures, and other ways of non-verbal expressions are the way love, acceptance, and reassurance are conveyed to a person with Alzheimer's. He must be treated with dignity and respect. It takes a lot of patience to communicate with an Alzheimer's patient. If he cannot understand you verbally, at least love and compassion should be felt when spending time with you.