Techniques to Enhance Good Communication with a Person with Dementia or Alzheimer’s Disease

Approach
1. Think about how you present yourself
2. Calm, gentle, matter-of-fact
3. Non-demanding (humor, cajoling, cheerful)
4. Try using touch to convey message
5. Begin conversation socially

Speech
1. Free from distractions
2. Begin conversation with orienting information
3. Look directly at them and make sure you have their attention
4. Be at eye level
5. Speak slowly and say individual words clearly
6. Short, simple sentences
7. Simple questions requiring yes/no answers
8. Very concrete terms and familiar words
9. Talk in a warm, easy-going, pleasant manner
10. Keep pitch of your voice low

Tasks Together
1. Focus on familiar skills and tasks
2. Give choices
3. Allow plenty of time for information to be absorbed
4. Repeat instructions exactly the same way
5. Break task into simple steps
6. Modify steps as the person becomes more impaired
7. Praise sincerely for success

Trouble Understanding You
1. Be sure to allow enough time
2. Demonstrate visually what you are saying
3. Think about the complexity of what you are saying
4. Try a hug and a change of subject

Trouble Understanding Them
1. Listen actively and carefully
2. Try to focus on a word or phrase that makes sense
3. Respond to the emotional tone of the statement
4. Stay calm and be patient
5. Ask family members for assistance

What Not to Do
1. Don’t argue
2. Don’t order them around
3. Don’t tell them what they can’t do
4. Don’t be condescending
5. Don’t ask a lot of questions that rely on a good memory
6. Don’t talk about people in front of them

When Verbal Communication Fails
1. Try distraction
2. Ignore verbal outbursts if you can’t think of a positive response
3. Try other forms of communicating

*Information obtained from Robinson/Spencer Communication Difficult Behaviors via the Alzheimer’s Association Green-Field Library