



## Four Steps to Better Communication with Persons with Dementia

- 1. Start the interaction in a conversational manner.**
  - Approach from the front, calmly; respecting their personal space
  - Make eye contact and remain at eye level while talking
  - Call the person by their preferred name
  - State who you are and why you are there
  - Allow time for a response
  - Focus first on your relationship and not on your task
- 2. Simplify what you say**
  - Know the resident's language abilities (their understanding/expression)
  - Use clear, simple, and short sentences
  - Give directions one at a time
  - If language ability is poor, use questions that can be answered "yes" or "no"
  - Restate your sentence if they don't understand the first
  - Try non-verbal forms of communication with visual cues
- 3. Check your approach**
  - Before providing care, check in with yourself. Pay attention to your:
    - Verbal message: tone of voice, rate of speech, volume and words
    - Non-verbal message: body language, facial
  - Suggest or invite rather than insist
  - Use encouraging language in a calm and soothing tone of voice
  - Avoid negative statements (ie. That's not nice, don't do that)
- 4. Be supportive**
  - **Listen** for their emotional message. Observe their: Tone of voice, body language, facial expression
  - Validate their emotional message and understand their needs: empathy, sincerity, acceptance, provide reassurance
  - Provide choices if possible
  - Don't argue
  - When the interaction becomes stressful:
    - Stop what you are doing
    - Empathize with the resident: "I'm sorry this is so hard. Let's take a break."
    - Tell them you will be back
    - Get support from your team to re-approach later