

Caregiver Assistance News

“CARING FOR YOU ... CARING FOR OTHERS”

Communicating When Giving Care... It's Not As Hard As You Think!

When you talk to the person you are assisting do they understand you? And do you understand them? No matter how hard it is to communicate, don't give up hope. A few simple techniques can help.

Talking to Someone Who Is Hard of Hearing

Loss of hearing can make people seem slow or not interested. Often, however, they simply can't hear what others are saying. They may not have their hearing aid turned up. To make sure you can be heard:

- ✓ **Stand, sit, or squat** so you are at eye level with the person.
- ✓ **Make sure your face is in the light** so that your lips and facial expressions can be seen.
- ✓ **Use simple sentences.**
For example, "Do you want to eat?"
- ✓ **Use body language** such as nodding or pointing and lots of facial expressions.
- ✓ **Speak in a normal tone**, facing the person, and making eye contact.
Do not shout.

Caring for a Person Who Has Had a Stroke

People who have had a stroke can lose the ability to speak or to understand others. Often, however, their ability to think stays the same as before the stroke—even though



their behavior may have changed:

- ✓ At times they can say words and at other times they can't. Or they may repeat the same word over and over.
- ✓ They may swear, laugh, or cry without realizing it.
- ✓ They may have trouble listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They may understand what you say but now are unable to speak clearly or be understood by you. Their speech may be mixed-up and make no sense.
- ✓ They may not be able to control their behavior or facial expressions.

Tip Before starting a conversation, announce what you are going to talk about. For example, say, "Betty, let's talk about our trip to the doctor's office." When you change the subject, say so—for example, "Betty, now let's talk about dinner."

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When talking with a person who has had a stroke:

- ✓ **Get the person's attention** by lightly touching an arm if it is acceptable to them.
- ✓ **Speak slowly and simply.**
- ✓ **Ask direct questions** that only require a *yes* or *no* answer.
- ✓ **Use pictures** instead of words.
- ✓ **Let the person express frustration.** Quiet your mind and listen carefully to them. (This will take lots of practice.)

Tip Be aware that a person who is unable to describe what he wants may get very excited and start banging on furniture. When this happens, ask obvious questions first to find out what the need or concern might be.

Understanding Alzheimer's

Learning how to communicate with someone with Alzheimer's is very important. These people have their own reality so **do not try to reason with them.** If you always remain calm, you can keep them calm, too. The most important thing to remember is **respond to their emotions—not to their behavior.** To improve your chances of being understood:

- ✓ **Reduce or eliminate background noise.** (Loud noises can actually cause *pain* to someone with Alzheimer's.)
- ✓ **Establish eye contact.** If the person is standing, stand; if the person is sitting, sit or squat down.
- ✓ **Address the person by name** and remind him or her of your name.
- ✓ **Explain what you are going to do** before you do it using one-step commands. Point to the object you are discussing. For example, say, "Do you want your slippers?" not "Do you want these?"



- ✓ **Avoid expressions that may cause confusion.** Don't say, "Jump into bed." Instead, say, "Get into bed."

Most Important of All— Maintain a Calm Atmosphere

People with Alzheimer's do best when they are in a calm place. Television programs should be quiet and non-violent, only caffeine-free beverages should be served, and family arguments should be avoided. To maintain a calm atmosphere—

- ✓ **Develop a consistent routine** of care or assistance.
- ✓ **Be sensitive to changing moods** and do not take them personally. They will find it harder to cope as the day gets longer.
- ✓ **Use humor.**
- ✓ **Give a backrub,** if appropriate.
- ✓ **Do not argue,** enter their reality and give them reassurance and comfort and agree with their statements.

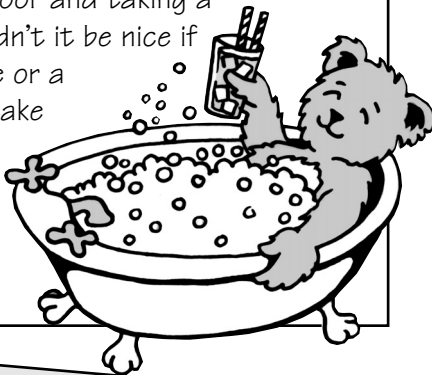
Taking Care of Yourself

The stress of taking care of someone can cause hostility to build to the breaking point. You can control your emotions by releasing anger and frustration in a safe way.

- ✓ Take a walk to cool down, preferably in nature.
- ✓ When home alone, smack a rolled towel against a solid wall.
- ✓ Go to a private corner and unleash your anger on a big pillow.
- ✓ Spend 15 minutes in meditation.
- ✓ Share your feelings with a trusted friend.
- ✓ Practice daily gratitude.

Feeling Good About Yourself

Know that you are providing a wonderful service as a caregiver. Find little ways to relax and enjoy yourself. During the ride home, enjoy the scenery instead of thinking about your worries. Or relax at home by locking the bathroom door and taking a bath. (Wouldn't it be nice if your spouse or a friend can take care of the kids while you soak!)



TIP OF THE MONTH

Make Your Life Easier

Problem: A person with advanced Alzheimer's or dementia repeatedly asks you the same question—for example, "Where are my shoes?"

Solution: Use a snack, a change in location or a story to distract the person.



IDEA EXCHANGE

How would you manage this?

Question: I work all day as a caregiver and then take care of my mom at home. The situation is very stressful for me, and I wonder if I need help.

Answer: You need help or a change of jobs when you:

- Are using more and more alcohol to relax
- Have physical symptoms such as skin rashes, backaches, or stomach pains
- Feel unable to concentrate
- Feel keyed up and on edge
- Feel like using—or have used—physical violence against those you are caring for
- Are unable to sleep



Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride and competence.

Ordering Info

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Healthy Exercise - A Stress Buster!

Increasing self-confidence and in your ability to do many things are among the most valuable effects of healthy exercise. Other benefits include:

- Toning of the body
- Increasing flexibility, strength and balance
- Having more endurance
- Improving efficiencies of other body functions
- Maintaining bone strength

Additionally you will be able to manage stress better, feel less depressed and you are likely to experience improved sleep.

Tips for Healthy Exercising

The following tips may help you increase your chances for continuing your exercise schedule:

- Select an activity you enjoy and can easily do
- Wait 1½ to 2 hours after eating to exercise
- Wear clothing that allows your body to breathe
- Listen to your body - begin slowly
- Make small changes to increase physical activity every day
- Have fun improving and maintaining your health—and taking care of you!

Only you can change you. Others can help. Seek the advice of your physician and/or a qualified instructor for specific goals, such as cardiac strengthening.

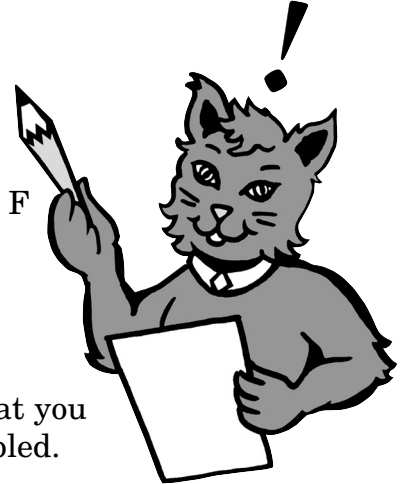
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“ C A R I N G F O R Y O U ... C A R I N G F O R O T H E R S ”

Q U I C K Q U I Z

Think about how you can improve by using some of the suggestions learned.

1. Using pictures can work well to communicate with someone. T F
2. It helps for a person to hear you if you shout. T F
3. We can send an unkind message to someone through words and mannerisms. T F
4. Sometimes a person who has had a stroke may understand what you say but you can't understand them because their speech is garbled. T F
5. People with Alzheimer's live in their own world. Sometimes you have to agree with what they are saying and "play along." T F
6. If a person is hard of hearing, make sure his or her hearing aid is in before talking. T F
7. It will disturb a person with Alzheimer's if the TV is tuned to a violent show. T F
8. When providing assistance to someone, it is important to control your emotions and release your frustration in a safe way. T F
9. Life is stressful for all of us. Name three ways you can release your anger and frustration safely.



1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Name _____

Signature _____ Date _____