



(866) 919-5443

## 4 TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH PROGRESSING DEMENTIA PATIENTS

If a loved one has dementia they will begin to show signs their cognitive abilities getting worse over time. Persons exhibiting dementia will show signs of memory loss, confusion, lack of attentiveness and a difficulty in communication. Dementia is frightening for those who experience the symptoms; however, communicating with sufferers can be frustrating for caretakers who need to communicate important matters to the afflicted or want to express their concern and compassion.

There are ways to make communicating with individuals with dementia easier and more effective. Symptoms will progress with each stage.

### EARLY STAGE DEMENTIA

Those with mild dementia are still able to engage in conversation as usual. They may show signs of forgetfulness, show difficulty remembering names or words or repeat things they've said already.

- Be patient with individuals even though they may appear to have the normal abilities of someone their age.
- Ask direct questions regarding their needs or wants instead of relying on the opinion of other observers or family members.
- Make sure to include them in group activities or conversations.
- Refrain from making assumptions about their ability to communicate.

### MID STAGE DEMENTIA

They will face greater challenges in communicating their needs to others. Moderate dementia can be a long road towards severe dementia and during this time, the symptoms will intensify. Caretakers should be flexible and attentive in their communication strategies and should be extremely patient. Individuals will need time to express themselves completely. They will be searching for the right words and may grow frustrated. They may be easily distracted.

- Try to find time to communicate with them when you are not multitasking and they are not distracted.
- Use active listening. Repeat what the person says back to them if you are unsure and give them an opportunity to either confirm or correct what they said.



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- Speak clearly in short bursts of information. Give them time to acknowledge the understanding of one item before moving on to the next.
- If there is confusion on their part, you can supplement your statements with visual clues or non-verbal communication strategies.

## LATE STAGE DEMENTIA

Individuals may only be able to communicate non-verbally. While they may still understand what you say, they may not be able to respond as they would have in years prior.

- Always speak to them face-to-face if possible. If they are seated, lower your face to get on their level.
- Always identify yourself when you start a conversation.
- Ask them to point, gesture or use other non-verbal methods to answer a question or express a desire.
- Observe their emotional reaction for clues on their needs or how they are doing in the moment.

Caring for someone with progressing dementia can be a difficult time, with many unanswered questions. SC House Calls can help guide you through this process. Feel free to reach out to our team at 803-491-0909 with questions or healthcare needs.