Communication Tips

As dementia progresses, it may become more difficult for your loved one to communicate and understand what others are communicating. Your loved one may have difficulty:

- Finding the right word
- Understanding what words mean
- Sensitivity to touch or loud noises
- Staying on track while speaking
- Paying attention during longer conversations
- Difficulty blocking out background noise or other distractions

Early stage:

- Do not assume a person’s ability to communicate
- Be patient and reassuring – give the person time to respond
- Speak directly to the person – involve them in conversation
- It’s okay to laugh! Humor lightens the mood and makes communication easier.

Middle Stage:

- Avoid criticizing or correcting
- Do not overwhelm with lengthy explanations
- Ask one question at a time
- Ask yes or no questions, it’s best to not offer too many choices
- Use visual or non-verbal cues

Late Stage:

- Approach from the front and identify yourself
- Encourage non-verbal communication like pointing
- Use touch, sights, sounds, smells, etc. as a way to communicate
- It’s okay if you do not know what to say—your presence and friendship are what is important.
Online Resource for Families Caring for Someone with Memory Loss or Dementia

“I just don’t know what to do.”

Taking care of someone with Alzheimer’s disease or another form of dementia can be challenging. The changes in how the person acts, what they are able to do, and memory loss can result in difficult situations.

The information in “A Guide for Family Caregivers” can answer questions and provide suggestions on how to respond to the most common symptoms of memory loss and dementia.

You are Not Alone

You don’t have to figure everything out on your own. This guide can help. Go online to:

dhs.wisconsin.gov/dementia/families.htm

to find the guide and other resources and information that can assist in providing care for family members facing the journey with dementia.