

Appendix O: Communication Strategies

Table 14 outlines communication strategies that can be used during the provision of oral care for persons who are behaviourally complex.

Table 14: Communication Strategies

STRATEGY	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES USED TO APPROACH PERSON		
Greet person	Greets person upon initial contact	"Hello, Ms. X, how are you today?"
Compliment person	Compliments resident, building rapport or validating person	"You look nice today"
VERBAL STRATEGIES USED DURING ORAL CARE		
Proposition	Direction, request, or instructions	"Please turn on the water"
Repetition	Exact repeat of part or entire previous instruction.	"Turn the tap on, turn the tap"
Introduce task	At beginning of oral care, indicate to the resident that they are going to brush their teeth	"We are going to brush your teeth now"
Explanation of actions	Explain what they are going to do with the person during steps of the task	"I am going to help you turn the water on now"
Use of person's name	Address person by their first or last name during steps of oral care to gain their attention	"Ms. X, here is the toothbrush"
Negotiation	Dialogue between the health provider or caregiver and the person to reach an agreement or understanding focused on oral care	"Okay, after we finish brushing, I will get you a cup of tea"

STRATEGY	DEFINITION	EXAMPLE
Encouraging comments	Verbal praise, reassurance, optimism directed towards person while participating in the task	"You're doing a good job!"
NON-VERBAL STRATEGIES USED DURING ORAL CARE		
Hand object to the person	Provide object to resident as a tactile prompt for the person	Hand towel to the person
Guided touch	Use physical touch to guide resident through a step of the task	Guide person's hand to the toothbrush
Comfort touch	Use touch to indicate support or reassurance during a step of the task	Touch the person's shoulder
Attention touch	Use touch to gain or re-gain the attention of the resident when the person becomes distracted	Touch the person's hand to indicate that it is time to begin brushing
Demonstration	Illustrate, with action, how to perform a step of the task	Demonstrate how to brush teeth
Pointing	Visually indicate direction of an object necessary for the step of the task	Points to the location of the toothpaste

Source: Reprinted from: Wilson R, Rochon E, Mihailidis A, et al. Quantitative analysis of formal caregivers' use of communication strategies while assisting individuals with moderate and severe Alzheimer's disease during oral care. J Commun Disord. 2013;46(3):249-63. Reprinted with permission.