

Appendix K: Attitudes, Skills, and Knowledge That Are Beneficial for Communication in Dementia Care

Table 9 lists suggested content of communication skills training in dementia care.

Table 9: Content of Communication Skills Training in Dementia Care

SKILLS, ATTITUDES, AND KNOWLEDGE		
Verbal skills	Before physical care	Announce single activities Use one-step instructions, no usage of multiple instructions Delay physical assistance after verbal prompt
	At an early stage of illness trajectory	Avoid arguing, accept different perceptions of time and reality Use of yes/no and choice questions versus open-ended questions Suggest words when person is struggling for a specific word
	At a moderate to late stage of illness trajectory	Use names and nouns Use the person's name Use simple sentences Repeat and rephrase sentences
	General skills	Use positive and biographical statements Identify personal communication styles and preferences Identify and do not use elder speak (diminutives, pronoun substitutions) Slow down
Non-verbal and emotional skills	Recognize unusual communicative attempts	Recognize micro-behavioral changes (eye movement, lifting the corner of the mouth, tears, etc.) as attempts to communicate View behavior that challenges as an attempt to communicate unmet needs
	Reflect your own non-verbal behavior	Make eye contact Give enough time Avoid high-pitch voice Listen actively
	Recognize and answer to emotions	Notice and validate person with dementia's effects Use emotional tone Show empathy

SKILLS, ATTITUDES, AND KNOWLEDGE		
Attitudes towards people with dementia	Change perspectives	Take a resident's perspective on communication
	Think about activities	Try to increase pleasant events
	Reflect on your perceptions	Identify impacts on your communication (self-concept, depression, isolation, dependency)
	General attitudes	Use a calm approach Avoid over-nurturing, i.e. infantilizing or patronizing speech
Behavioral management skills	General behavioral skills	Respond to behavioral disturbances Use distraction techniques when aggressive behavior occurs Avoid confrontation Be practical Set realistic goals Clarify emotions
Usage of tools		Create and use memory books Create and use memory aids Create memory charts Use a behavior diary
Self-experiences	Reflect your communication style	Collect and reflect your successful and ineffective personal communication strategies Work out what works individually
	Give and receive feedback	Share experiences with others
Theoretical knowledge	General and basic knowledge	Know about dementia and symptoms; recognize the difference between normal forgetting, mild cognitive impairment, and Alzheimer's; know nature of behavioral symptoms, person, and environment Develop appropriate expectations of Alzheimer patients

Source: Reprinted from "Communication skills training in dementia care: A systematic review of effectiveness, training content, and didactic methods in different care settings," by E. Eggenberger, K. Heimerl, & M. I. Bennett, 2013, *International Psychogeriatrics*, 25(3), 345–358. Reprinted with permission.