



10 Tips to Help Family Members Engage with Loved Ones Who Have Dementia

Once your loved one with dementia moves into a long-term care or memory care facility, you may think the hard part is over. While the round-the-clock care our facility takes a huge weight off caregivers, interactions or conversations with your loved ones may still be difficult or painful for you; or you just may not know how to engage anymore. Following are our top ten tips to help make the most of your visits.

- **Always Introduce Yourself.** Dementia can cause confusion at any stage of the disease. Introduce yourself with a smile where your loved one can clearly see you.
- **Embrace Their Timeline.** For example, after you introduce yourself, they may recall you as a child and not as an adult at your current age. It's best to not correct, just engage in conversation.
- **Keep a Routine.** Routine is important for those with dementia; if possible, set specific days and/or times when you come and stick to them.
- **Bring Familiar Objects.** Hopefully when your loved one moved in, some familiar things were brought along. Don't stop there! Bring familiar things for the holidays, a book or CD they've always loved, and even children or pets if allowed.
- **Don't Argue.** While it can be tough to not argue when they are combative or wrong, just know your loved one is confused. Arguing with them will do no good, so just bite your tongue and gently change the subject.
- **Do Something Together.** Meaningful activities are important for any resident, but especially those with dementia. Check out our facility's programming, or read a book, watch a favorite movie, or take a walk outside if they are able.
- **Be Okay Being Quiet.** Your loved one may not always want to talk, and that's okay! Forcing conversation won't help either of you, so just sit in the silence and enjoy your time with them.
- **Understand Their Limits.** Your loved one may get tired or overwhelmed easily, especially as their disease progresses. Hour-long visits are usually the sweet spot, see what works best.
- **No Matter What, Keep Visiting.** While it can be tough to visit when your loved one no longer recognizes you, it's likely that they still have emotional memory. This means even if they don't remember you, they recognize their emotion around you and can remember the connection.
- **Embrace Their Reality.** It's hard when your loved one talks about seeing things that no longer or never existed, but it's important to not try to correct them. For example, if they are seeing a dog or a loved one who has passed, embrace their reality and gently change the subject when you can.

