

Simple Steps for Dementia Supportive Communication

1. Approach and Inquire

If you think someone may need help, start with a calm, respectful approach.

- Approach from the front with a friendly, open manner.
- Remove hats or sunglasses so your face is visible.
- Introduce yourself clearly and ask what help is needed.
- Give simple information and assist where you can, while leaving room for independence.

2. Communicate Clearly, Directly, and Simply

How you speak and listen makes all the difference. Here's a simple memory aid to use:

SPEAK

- **S**imple words – avoid jargon, metaphors, or jokes.
- **P**ause – give extra time, don't rush, don't interrupt.
- **E**ngage directly – speak to the person, not about them.
- **A**ttentive body language – eye contact, open posture.
- **K**ind tone – warmth goes a long way.

3. Support Their Reality

Correcting often increases stress. Instead, focus on connection.

- Connect, don't correct – focus on feelings, not facts.
- Try to see how the person is perceiving the situation.
- Invite them to share more about what they're trying to do.

4. Consider Care Partners

Supporting a person living with dementia also means supporting their care partner.

- Be a listening ear and show patience.
- Involve them and check in on their needs.
- Look for cues about how they and the person with dementia work together.

If the person living with dementia is unsure, you can redirect the question to the care partner – but always include both.