

Some golden rules for communicating where there is dementia

- Try to make eye contact and make sure the person can hear you
- Avoid asking direct questions e.g. instead of asking 'Would you like to put your coat on?', show the coat, holding it open with an enquiring expression

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- Speak for a short time only, in a steady, calm, meaningful way. Smile! Facial expressions convey a great deal. Be aware of your body language and the non-verbal message you may be sending.
- Don't interrupt or contradict even if the person says something that you know is not correct. Do not directly confront them but gently steer the conversation around to something more profitable.
- Do not take words they say literally but instead look for the emotions and message behind the words. Finding out what you can do to make the person more comfortable may meet the need.

Some golden rules for communicating where there is dementia

- Do not tap someone with dementia on the shoulder from behind to try and gain their attention. Always approach the person clearly from in front.
- You need to learn to enjoy repetition and may need to repeat things out loud to remind the individual what they have just said.
- It is important in everything that you do and say to convey full respect to the person as an individual and as a fellow believer in the Lord
- Use words which will enable them to feel contented and valued in the reality which they are experiencing at that moment.

Having a 'buddy' for each person with dementia

- Appoint someone to have a relationship with the person with dementia, to sit alongside them during and after a meeting to befriend and accompany them out for a break when necessary.
- If the person with dementia has a question, the buddy can answer it quietly or if there is a need, he or she can meet it without any fuss.
- They can help if the person needs the toilet or becomes distressed. It may mean going out to another room for a while.
- When the person is feeling more comfortable, they can be encouraged to rejoin the service.

Making the building dementia friendly

- There are specific visual problems associated with dementia which can make it difficult to discriminate between colours and textures e.g. the loss of peripheral vision and the ability to interpret an image.

Things to avoid

- Shiny floors which will appear 'wet' to those with dementia
- Patterned flooring which may cause illusions
- Dark flooring and shadows which may appear as 'holes'
- Blue/grey tones – warm tones are seen much better
- Dark wooden thresholds may appear as a hole or a barrier
- Furniture which is the same colour or tone as the flooring

You will also need to ensure that:

- Different floorings laid adjacent to each other should blend together so not to create the appearance of a step
- Where there are steps, fluorescent tape can be laid along the edge so they can be seen clearly
- Lighting is of good quality in each room to avoid shadows and glaring
- Strong colours are used so objects are clearly visible and distinguishable e.g. lavatory walls are best painted with a bold colour so that the white lavatory 'stands out'

- Each space is clearly designed with good tonal contrast between floors, walls and doors
- There should be good picture signage, cues or familiar objects to signpost for toilets and entrances

All these suggestions will help to prevent trip hazards and falls, as well as visual illusions which may cause confusion or agitation.

The Christian with dementia

- The most important thing we can do in our church is to communicate with our brothers and sisters with dementia – as Psalm 42 says ‘Only a call from the depths can provoke a response from the depths.’
- In dementia friendly churches we can minister to God’s precious people, praying with them, singing alongside them and reaffirming them as an essential part of the body of believers.