

A Good Visit with Someone Who Has Dementia

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Otherwise caring family and friends often don't visit those with dementia for lack of understanding how to have a good visit.

Here are some helpful tips to get you on your way:

Plan a time limit on your visit, one that you can handle with grace.

Slow down your pace and your mind before entering their space.

Identify yourself each time. If they don't know who you are, introduce yourself by your first name, "Hi mom, Brad, your son here to spend some time with you." ***It may take a full minute for them to orient*** to your being there and who you are.

State what day and time it is. Then, *wait* for them to absorb this information. ***Processing information is slowed in the brain of a person with Alzheimer's and related dementia disorders.*** Stimulate with a sentence and *wait*. Sometimes it takes a full minute or longer for the brain to accept the message, make some sense of it, and formulate a response. So, *wait the minute*. Also, don't jump from subject to subject.

Plan a task to be accomplished while you're there; a short walk with ***easy slow*** talk (you'll carry most of the conversation probably), reading a story or listening to music together, a manicure, a foot soak, mouth care or hair brushing (with the usually comforting human touch).

Communicate positive feelings through quiet hand holding, kisses (when appropriate), a light back rub, a hand resting on her back or forearm. Always approach them from the front before touching them so they don't startle.

Talk slowly and deliberately. Repeat parts as necessary to be clear.

Avoid arguing with their perceptions of things. Sometimes saying nothing works best. (P.S. You always lose an argument with a confused person!)

Enjoy being in their world. **Play** in it with them. ***Do not reality orient or correct their memories or perceptions of things.***

Avoid questioning and quizzing (these are actually unkind). Give information instead. **When** asking them to choose something, **offer only 2 choices**, either of which is acceptable. More than that is too much for the brain to deal with now. For example "Do you want to walk with me now, or talk together first?"

Try breathing and moving deliberately. It will be beneficial for youand them (the effect is contagious).

Be aware that your presence alone may be enough to bring peace and comfort in their confusing and often frightening world.

Practicing these can be meditative. You'll learn great patience and a sense of peacefulness. That is good for you! You will also enjoy yourself as you sense the joy you bring to them.