1

The Empowered Caregiver

- Building Foundations of Caregiving
- Supporting Independence
- **Communicating Effectively**
- Responding to Dementia-Related Behaviors
- Exploring Care and Support Services

2

Learning Objectives

- Explain how dementia affects communication.
- Describe how a person-centered approach can help with communication.
- List strategies to help you communicate well with a person living with dementia.
- Identify ways to improve communication with family, friends and health care professionals.

3

4

What Is Communication?

How we tell people about our wants and needs.

How we share our thoughts, feelings and ideas.

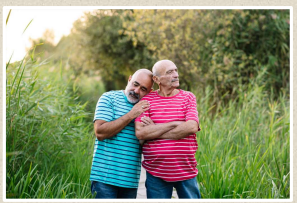
How we connect to each other.

5

Knowledge Check

Which of the following are ways that people communicate?

- Talking and listening
- Attitude and tone of voice
- Facial expressions and body language
- All of the above



6

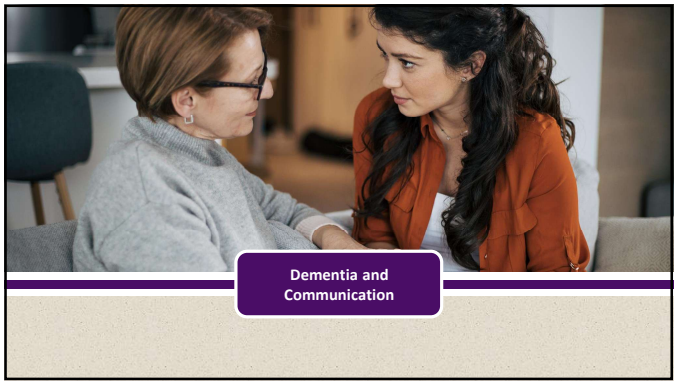
Knowledge Check

Which of the following are ways that people communicate?

- Talking and listening
- Attitude and tone of voice
- Facial expressions and body language
- All of the above

Communication comes from our words, attitudes and tone of voice. It also comes from our face and body movements. It includes listening, which can sometimes be more important than talking.

7



Dementia and Communication

8

How does dementia affect communication?

Alzheimer's and other dementias cause **damage to brain cells.**

These changes in the brain affect **memory, thinking, behavior and communication skills.**

Communication changes are **caused by the disease, not the person.**

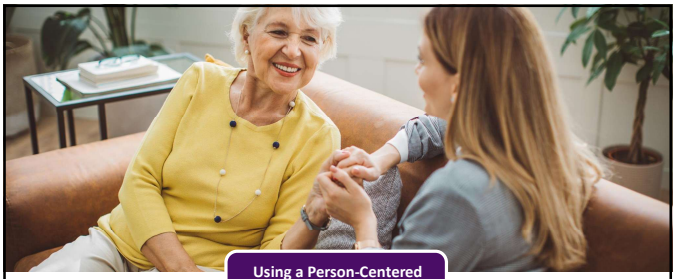
9

Communication changes are often the earliest sign of dementia.

Changes vary from person to person, but common ones include:

- Difficulty finding the right words.
- Repeating familiar words, phrases and stories.
- Describing an item when they can't think of the word for it.
- Forgetting what they were talking about in the middle of a sentence.
- Difficulty organizing words in a way that makes sense.
- Going back to speaking in their native language.
- Speaking less often.
- Using hand gestures more than speaking.

10



Using a Person-Centered Approach to Communication

11

Communication changes are often the earliest sign of dementia.

- A person-centered approach means you use what you know about the person and adjust how you care for them and communicate with them based on their unique abilities and preferences.
- This approach can help you communicate with someone living with dementia.

12

Applying a Person-Centered Approach to Communication

1

Treat them with respect and dignity.

Tips

- Use knowledge of the person's likes, dislikes and communication preferences.
- Call the person by their preferred name.
- Avoid talking about the person as if they are not there.
- Avoid correcting them.
- Validate their feelings.

13

Applying a Person-Centered Approach to Communication

2

Include the person living with dementia in conversations.

Tips

- Talk directly to the person.
- Speak slowly and clearly.
- Use a calm tone of voice.
- Acknowledge what the person says.
- Help them engage in conversations that are meaningful to them.
- Have conversations about family and friends and your lives, including things you have done together.

14

Applying a Person-Centered Approach to Communication

3

Be patient.

Tips

- Give the person time to decide what they want to say.
- Avoid interrupting.
- Try not to speak for them.
- Give them choices.
- Connect in the moment.

15

Applying a Person-Centered Approach to Communication

4 **Limit distractions.**

Tips

- Find a quiet place that has few distractions.
- Get rid of extra noise and visual distractions.
- Have one-on-one conversations.
- Keep conversations simple.
- Turn off or turn down the sound of the TV.
- Put away your phone.

16

Applying a Person-Centered Approach to Communication

5 **Use nonverbal communication.**

Tips

It can be helpful to know how to send and receive messages without using words.

- Use positive body language and facial expressions.
- Use hand gestures, like pointing to an object.
- Make eye contact.
- Use gentle physical contact.
- Use touch, sight, sounds and tastes as other ways to communicate.

17

18

Judith R.
Caregiver

19

20

Katie B.
Caregiver

21

Putting It Into Practice - Communication

Alonzo's wife, Alicia, is living with Alzheimer's disease and no longer able to get out of bed on her own. Prior to her diagnosis, she worked at an elementary school as a librarian. Alicia is no longer able to speak and Alonzo is having a hard time communicating with her. This is making Alonzo feel less connected to Alicia.

22

Putting It Into Practice - Communication

What could Alonzo do to try to communicate with Alicia and stay connected to her?

Select the two best tips for success:

- [ ] 1. Hold Alicia's hand as he tells her what he did that day.
- [ ] 2. Put the radio on in Alicia's room.
- [ ] 3. Read one of Alicia's favorite books to her.
- [ ] 4. There is nothing Alonzo can do because Alicia can no longer speak.

23

Putting It Into Practice - Communication

What could Alonzo do to try to communicate with Alicia and stay connected to her?

Select the two best tips for success:

- [x] 1. Hold Alicia's hand as he tells her what he did that day.
- [ ] 2. Put the radio on in Alicia's room.
- [x] 3. Read one of Alicia's favorite books to her.
- [ ] 4. There is nothing Alonzo can do because Alicia can no longer speak.

24

25

Tips for Communicating Well with Others

Family and friends

- Talk about your feelings, worries and needs. Be open and honest.
- Have difficult conversations when you need to.
- Stay connected and check in regularly.

26

Tips for Communicating Well with Others

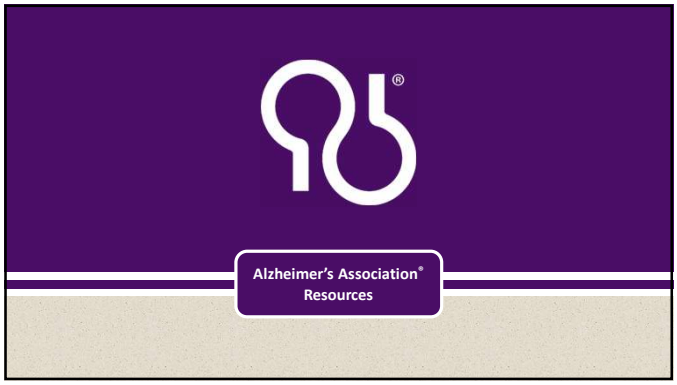
Health care professionals

- Prepare for appointments.
- Explain the details.
- Take notes during appointments.
- Think about your environment.

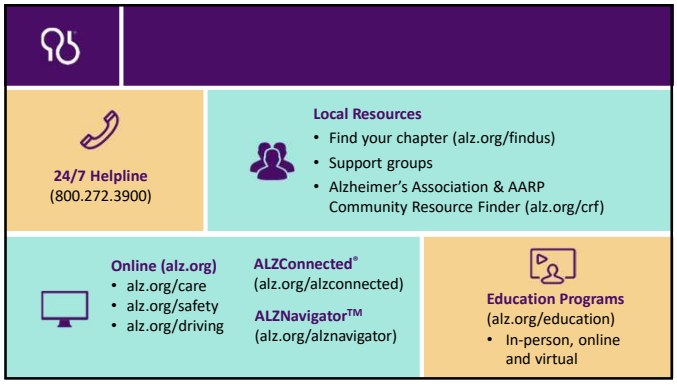
27

Alzheimer's Association Resources
Next module: Responding to Dementia-Related Behaviors

28


Alzheimer's Association®
Resources

29


24/7 Helpline
(800.272.3900)
Local Resources
• Find your chapter (alz.org/findus)
• Support groups
• Alzheimer's Association & AARP Community Resource Finder (alz.org/crf)
Online (alz.org)
• alz.org/care
• alz.org/safety
• alz.org/driving
ALZConnected®
(alz.org/alzconnected)
ALZNavigator™
(alz.org/alznavigator)
Education Programs
(alz.org/education)
• In-person, online and virtual

30

Questions?

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

31