

Introduction

Arming caregivers with knowledge about the progression of dementia helps in the creation of an individualized care plan. In addition, person-centered dementia care is better served when caregivers are able to recognize behaviors and communication issues that are common through the three stages of dementia.

Source: "Guide To Living With Dementia," www.homewatchcaregivers.com/pathways-to-memory.aspx

Early Stage (Mild)

- Cannot find the right words to name things or to complete thoughts;
- Scrambles sequence of events when relating a story;
- Speaks of past events as if they are currently taking place;
- Cannot remember what was just said;
- Has difficulty following directions;
- Short-term memory is affected, may repeat questions and stories;
- Makes multiple phone calls to a family member to ask about appointments, people, and places;
- Becomes suspicious and makes paranoid or accusatory statements; and
- Becomes defensive if corrected or if his "reality" is challenged.

Middle Stage (Moderate)

- Confused if someone talks fast or uses slang, or if someone uses abstract ideas or offers too many thoughts or choices;
- Needs more time to respond to others or to join conversations;
- Becomes frustrated if more than one person talks at the same time;
- Begins to use substitute words or uses unorganized sentences;
- Is often reduced to yes/no responses out of fear of making mistakes "in public;"
- Makes inappropriate, odd, or impolite statements (dementia erases lines not crossed in "polite company");
- Repeats questions and stories;
- Sings frequently or speaks in rhyme; and
- Is prone to fabricate forgotten details.

Steps for Successful Communication

Steps to Successful Communication

GETTING STARTED	FACIAL EXPRESSION	VOICE	BODY LANGUAGE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approach from the front. • Smile • Identify yourself • Use the person's name • If possible, be at eye level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish & maintain eye contact • Be friendly & relaxed • Always remember humor: smiles & laughter go a long way • Be patient and supportive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak slowly & clearly • Use a gentle & relaxed tone of voice • Convey an easy-going manner 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid sudden movement • Be open & relaxed with your stance • Remain calm & confident to provide reassurance • Use gestures such as pointing • Give visual cues

Late Stage (Severe)

- Speaks one to six words a day;
- Uses words that make no sense, or may just be sounds;
- Repeats what's been said rather than responding to speaker;
- Responds to nonverbal communication: music, sound, touch, and visual stimulation; and
- Communicates needs nonverbally through behaviors, facial expression, and sounds.