

Caregiver Assistance News

“Caring for You - Caring for Others”

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence,
Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

www.aaa7.org **Helping You Age Better!**



MARCH 2022

Communicating When Providing Care

When you talk to the person you are assisting, do they understand you? And do you understand them? No matter how difficult these challenges are, do not give up trying to understand and being understood. A few simple techniques can help.



Talking to Someone Who Is Hard of Hearing

Loss of hearing can make people seem slow or not interested. Often; however, they simply can't hear what others are saying. They may not have their hearing aid turned up. To make sure you can be heard:

- Stand, sit or squat so you are at eye level with the person.
- Make sure your face is in the light so that your lips and facial expressions can be seen.
- Use simple sentences. For example, “Do you want to eat?”
- Use body language such as nodding or pointing and lots of facial expressions.
- Speak in a normal tone, facing the person, and making eye contact. Do not shout.

Understanding Alzheimer’s Communication

Learning how to communicate with someone with Alzheimer’s is very important. They have their own reality, so do not try to reason with them. If you always remain calm, you can keep them calm too. The most important thing to remember is to respond to their emotions—not to their behavior.

To improve your chances of being understood:

- Reduce background noise. (Loud noises can actually cause pain to someone with Alzheimer’s).
- Establish eye contact. If the person is standing, stand; if the person is sitting, sit or squat down.
- Address the person by name and remind him or her of your name.
- Explain what you are going to do before you do it using one-step commands. Point to the object you are discussing. For example, say, “Do you want your slippers?” not, “Do you want these?”
- Avoid expressions that may cause confusion. Don’t say, “Jump into bed.” Instead, say, “Get into bed.”

Before starting a conversation, announce what you are going to talk about. For example, say, “Betty, let’s talk about our trip to the doctor’s office.” When you change the subject, say so—for example, “Betty, now let’s talk about dinner.”

Encourage Cooperation

First, make sure they understand what you are asking. They may be confused, especially in cases of dementia, or may be feeling ill and simply unable to respond quickly.

Make sure they are comfortable and not sick - they may be confused, over-stimulated, or in physical pain.

Be a listener—take time to ask the person in your care how they are doing. Sometimes, combative behavior is a symptom of a deeper issue. For example, a person may refuse to be bathed because they are feeling modest, or they may refuse to eat in response to a sense of loss of control. Giving the person choices can make them more likely to cooperate.

Be patient - your schedule may be overwhelming, but the person in your care is on their own schedule. Allow more time than usual for simple tasks. Too many activities at once can provoke a reaction because the person feels overwhelmed.

Remain calm - seeing you calm may help calm them down.

When the person is upset, delay the personal care if possible - can the task you are attempting be put off until the person is calmer?

Do not contradict their reality - affirm their feelings. Say, “I see you are angry.” If they believe something to be true, do not disagree, unless it poses a physical threat.

Track the behavior. Keep notes on times of day, frequency, or type of behavior problem.

Tips on Changing What YOU Do

You may not be able to control the other person’s behavior, but you can control your own. Here’s how to appear less confrontational to the person who is agitated:

- Stand to the side of the person or at eye level rather than towering over them—especially if there are several people tending to them at once.
- Don’t expect an immediate response. Allow extra time.
- Keep the room calm. Turn off the TV and radio.
- Speak clearly and slowly. Repeat softly what is necessary.

Handling Angry Outbursts or Uncooperative Behavior

First, try to diffuse the anger. There are several ways to do this. You will have to experiment to see what works best with the person in your care.

You can try:

- Humor—Making light of the situation, but not the person.
- Empathy—“I see how upset you are and I understand.”
- Changing the Subject—Address what they are saying briefly and then move on to a different topic.
- Take a Break—Tell the person you have a task to take care of in another room and that you’ll discuss the issue in a little while. This will give them time to cool down and you a chance to take some deep breaths to get centered again.

Taking Care of Yourself

Changing Behaviors One Step at a Time

Sometimes we are not aware that our behaviors can affect other people's behaviors. To be able to make changes in our interactions with others, we must try to improve on our behaviors one step at a time. Try these simple steps:

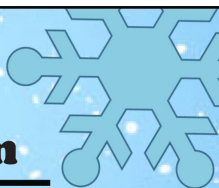
- *Be generous with compliments. Do not wait for others to do significant accomplishments before you give them positive feedback. Say something nice whenever you catch them doing a good job, no matter how small.*
- *Be generous with your smiles. A smile can be encouraging for someone who is struggling to do some task and can foster self-esteem.*
- *Do not allow yourself to nurture negative thoughts. Try this trick: wear a rubber band on your wrist for a week. Snap it against your wrist whenever you catch yourself thinking unkind thoughts.*
- *Accept others for who they are and avoid being critical of them.*



Memory Care

Sometimes, arguing, and refusing to follow directions, are the behaviors that accompany Alzheimer's. Other times, the person is frustrated by feeling sick or without control over many aspects of their life, and takes these frustrations out on those around them, especially the caregiver. Remember, they are upset about the situation, not you.

HEAP Home Energy Assistance Program



Now open for applications for 2021-2022.

This program can help eligible Ohioans manage their heating bills. Applications are available from your local Community Action Agency

If interested or if you have questions, contact your county Community Action Agency or the AAA7 Resource Center at 1-800-582-7277.

TELEPHONE CAREGIVER SUPPORT

Thursday, March 17th
1:30 pm - 2:30 pm



If you are interested in this free support group, please contact Vicki Woyan for more details.

Call: 1-800-582-7277, ext. 215

E-Mail: info@aaa7.org

Safety Tips - Listening: More Important Than Talking

Have you ever acted like you were listening to someone who was talking, but in reality you were thinking about what you were going to answer the other person when it's your turn to talk or thinking about something else? Many of us are guilty of not really listening to what others say. Ways to improve listening skills:



- Try not to interrupt someone who is talking.
- Try to really hear their words and repeat back what they have said. This way, they know that you really heard what they said. (Then they might also be more willing to listen to you.)
- Avoid being defensive.
- Remember to show respect to the other person—even if you do not agree with their actions or words.

Effective communication leads to mutual understanding. It helps both parties find a solution to a problem. This means that your goal is not to win an argument or prove that you are right, but to reach an understanding.

Some content in this publication is excerpted from The Comfort of Home: Caregivers Series. It is for informational use and not health advice. It is not meant to replace medical care but to supplement it. The publisher assumes no liability with respect to the accuracy, completeness or application of information presented, or the reader's misunderstanding of the text.



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Your local Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc. serves the following counties in Ohio: Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence, Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton. Services are rendered on a non-discriminatory basis. Those interested in learning more about the services provided through the Area Agency on Aging District 7 can call toll-free at 1-800-582-7277. Here, individuals can talk directly with a trained Resource Specialist who will assist them with information surrounding the programs and services that are available to best serve their needs.

The Agency can also be reached via e-mail at info@aaa7.org.