

7 Communication Mistakes Caregivers Make Cheatsheet

THE 7 COMMUNICATION MISTAKES IN THIS CHEATSHEET:

1. CORRECTING
2. REORIENTING
3. LOGIC/REASON/EVIDENCE
4. SAYING "REMEMBER"
5. IMPATIENCE
6. BEATING YOURSELF UP
7. NOT ASKING FOR HELP

1. CORRECTING

TELLING YOUR PERSON WITH DEMENTIA THAT THEY HAVE DONE SOMETHING WRONG

a) Why do we correct our folks with dementia?

When we see anyone doing something incorrectly or inefficiently, correcting is what we have been taught to do in order to help people.

b) Why Correcting Doesn't Work

Our person with dementia no longer has the cognitive ability to self correct or doesn't have the self-awareness to see that anything is wrong even when it is pointed out.

c) What to do instead

1. Assess if what they are doing is a safety issue or harmful (pick your battles.)
2. If it is, instead of correcting them, ask them what they need & get them with what they need.
3. Engage them by asking them if they can help you with something, keep you company, or to join you somewhere else.
4. Get/call for help.

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2. REORIENTING

REORIENTING IS THE PRACTICE OF REMINDING SOMEONE OF WHERE THEY ARE PHYSICALLY AND WHAT TIME IT CURRENTLY IS

a) Why do we reorient our folks with dementia?

We do this in order to help them know what is going on.

b) Why Reorienting tends not to work

Due to:

- Memory Loss
- Delusions (fixed beliefs)
- Hallucinations (seeing/hearing things)
- Physical changes in the brain

They can't adjust to our reality anymore. They are figuring out reality based on what they still have.

c) What tends to work instead

1. Ask them 2-3 questions tops about their reality.

- How old they are
- How old parents, kids etc are
- What they need to do that day

2. Once you know where they are in time and space, base your answers & how you engage them using “their reality” instead of trying to get them to understand “our reality.”

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3. LOGIC/REASON/EVIDENCE

TRYING TO EXPLAIN OR "PROVE" SOMETHING TO YOUR PERSON WITH DEMENTIA

a) Why do we use logic, reason and evidence our folks with dementia?

We do this in order to help them know what is going on.

b) Why logic, reason & evidence tends not to work

- They may struggle to take in new information
- They may have delusions/fixed beliefs
- ...Or hallucinations (sees/hears things that aren't there)
- They may get details confused and thus not be able to process that you're saying

c) What tends to work instead

- Ask them 2-3 questions tops about the problem or about their delusion.
- Once you understand their reality, tell them an excuse or solution that fits with their reality.
- If this upsets them more, stop engaging with them until they calm.
- Once they have calmed, engage them in a task, leisure activity or conversation that is unrelated to what they were upset about before.

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4. SAYING REMEMBER

SAYING "REMEMBER" OR TESTING THEIR MEMORY

a) Why do say "remember" our folks with dementia?

We are simply used to asking people in general if they "remember" things as a reminder... or we test their memory to gage the progression of their disease... or as a way to slow it down. You aren't bad for doing this, you're normal!

b) Why saying "remember" tends not to work

Often times asking them if they remember things serves as a reminder of where they are falling short.

The feelings of inadequacy can manifest in:

- Refusals
- Anger
- Agitation

c) What tends to work instead

- Try to break the habit of saying "remember"
- Adjust the environment for what they can't do
- Paise them for what they can do
- Create tasks/activities that they can succeed in

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5. IMPATIENCE

BEING IMPATIENT OR RUSHING YOUR PERSON WITH DEMENTIA

a) Why do get impatient with our folks with dementia?

We are all only human. After hours of challenging behaviors, it's not always easy to keep your cool.

b) Why being impatient tends not to work

The time needed for folks with dementia to process sensory and verbal information is 2X longer than it was before dementia.

c) What tends to work instead

- Giving them an average of 30 more seconds than you would usually wait for an answer.
- If they are still not responding:
 1. Simplify what you're telling them
 2. Put the item in front of them and allow them to decide
- If you need to go somewhere:
 1. Give yourself more than enough time.
 2. See if it's possible to get help.
 3. Do a telehealth appointment or virtual option.

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6. BEATING YOURSELF UP

NEGATIVE SELF-TALK OR BEATING YOURSELF UP WHEN YOU TRY APPROACHES
THAT DON'T WORK THAT DAY

a) Why do caregivers beat themselves up?

The folks that tend to step up are the ones that care and want to do a good job. The truth is, there is no such thing as a perfect caregiver.

b) Why beating yourself up tends not to work

This WILL burn you out faster by beating yourself up when you make mistakes. This is a hard job that likely you just got thrown into.

c) What tends to work instead

- *Say 3-4 encouraging things to yourself that you would say to someone else if they tried something that didn't work.*

And that brings us to our final mistake...

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7. NOT ASKING FOR HELP

A LOT OF CAREGIVERS DON'T WANT TO BE A "BURDEN" TO THOSE AROUND THEM

a) *Why not asking for help tends not to work*

This isn't a one person job. As the disease progresses, you WILL burn yourself out trying to do everything.

b) *What tends to work instead*

- If you're scared, start small & ask for:
 - Help with groceries
 - Having appointments be made for you
 - Researching social workers etc
- Learn how to get more support by joining our free workshop coming up this September -

How To Stop The 4 Most Common Challenging Dementia Behaviors

Free 3 Day Workshop - Coming September 2025

Watch for email invite or check
dementiasuccesspath.com in September to sign up!



"I Want to Go Home"



Accusations

Refusals

