



# Dementia

## 10 TOP TIPS

for supporting  
people with dementia



Archdiocese of  
**Liverpool**

## 1

## Get to know the person

- Know their likes and dislikes
- Gather life history
- Have three points of conversation

## 2

## Maintain eye contact and smile!

*The person with dementia will notice*

- Your emotional state
- Your body language
- Tone of voice

## Slow down

- Provide care in a relaxed manner
- Help the person to do things for themselves
- Keep it simple

## Introduce yourself every time

- Tell the person your name
- Tell them what you are there for
- Refer to the person by their name

## Communicate clearly

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- Talk about one thing at a time
- Offer simple choices
- Speak clearly in a warm calm voice

## Step into the person's world

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*If the person becomes upset*

- Reassure the person
- Acknowledge that you can see the person is upset
- Validate what the person is saying or doing

## Keep it quiet

- Create a relaxed environment
- Stop, listen and avoid distraction
- Reduce conflicting noises
- Avoid crowds and lots of noise

## Don't argue or quibble

- Go with the flow
- Acknowledge and respect what the person is saying and doing
- Telling them they are wrong may have a negative effect

## Engage and encourage

- Get the person started with a meaningful activity
- Set activities up to succeed
- Focus on what the person can do

## Talk with others

- Share your experiences with others
- Talk together about what has happened and how you dealt with the situation
- Record what has helped and what has not

# A different reality... becoming a 'dementia detective'

**Firstly, try not to contradict the person with dementia as this could increase their anxiety.**

Remember that, at that moment, what they are saying is what they believe to be true.

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**Join their world! Focus on how you can put the person at ease, thus reducing their anxiety.**

*For example:*

If the person is always asking for their mother, whom you know is deceased, this can indicate a need for closeness, acceptance, affection or support. Rather than correcting them, you could simply respond 'Tell me about your mum, what was she like?' or 'Are you feeling upset at the moment?', 'I know I'm not your mum, but is there anything I can do for you?'

A person may believe that they still have a young son and they need to make his tea. This can indicate, for example, a need for being involved in activity that has value or purpose, or the need to feel needed. Try saying 'Have you any photographs of him? I'd like to see them. I bet he was a handful' or simply 'You must be really proud of him.'

A person might, for example, ask to go home during the evening.

Try asking 'Do you feel tired?' or 'Do you want to go home so that you can lie down? There is a room here for you with a nice comfy bed. We could go there now so that you can have a rest, would that be ok?'

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### **Do not feel guilty that you are encouraging what may seem to you as fantasy.**

If you can make the person with dementia feel content, relaxed and at ease rather than anxious, sad or distressed, you are simply doing the best thing for them.



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## **Learn to piece together the phrases, signals and behaviour of the person.**

Always try to focus on the emotion, rather than the actual communication. It is better to respond to the person's feelings and try to address their needs.

When you know the meaning behind the behaviour, you'll be more able to find solutions to help the person cope.

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## **The better we know a person, the more we can build up knowledge of what they might need when they say a certain comment or question.**

When we build up this awareness of an individual's way of communicating, it not only helps us to find an effective response to a tricky question, it means we can also put plans in place to address the person's needs. We can then share this plan and knowledge with everyone involved in supporting the person.

Thank you to 'Belong'  
for their support in producing this leaflet.  
[www.belong.org.uk](http://www.belong.org.uk)

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'Dementia has been around for a long time but as a diocese we have only recently become aware of how much we need to do to make people with dementia and their carers feel welcome in our community.'

Archbishop Malcolm McMahon OP  
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