

Better Communication in Alzheimer's Care

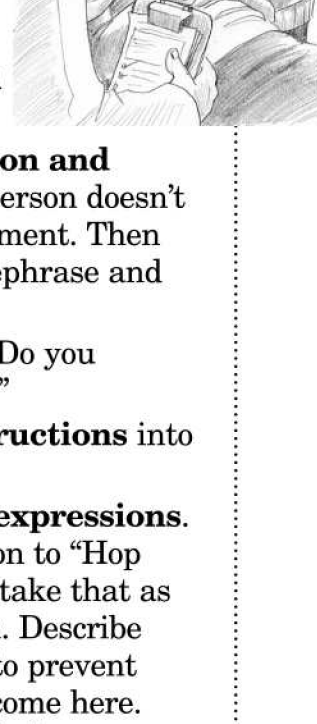
Communication refers to the ability to speak, understand speech, read, write, and gesture. It is how we make contact with each other. *Nonverbal* messages are given through silence, body movements, or facial expression. As much as 90 percent of our communication is nonverbal. Be aware that words can carry one message and the body another; people with dementia seem to be especially sensitive to the *tone or feeling* of your communication and that is what they will react to.

"Aphasia" (a-fa-zha) is a word for problems with language; it can affect speaking, understanding speech, reading, and writing. Aphasia is one of the problems associated with Alzheimer's disease (AD). In the early stages of the disease, people have trouble thinking of common words while speaking or writing. In time, the ability to understand what others are saying also declines. While people with AD continue to be able to read, they eventually do not understand what they are reading. Communication problems get progressively worse over the course of the illness, until verbal communication becomes virtually impossible.

Tips for Better Communication

- ✓ **Keep good eye contact.**
- ✓ **Don't interrupt or distract** the person while he is talking.
- ✓ **Avoid criticizing,** correcting and arguing.
- ✓ **Focus on the feelings,** not the facts.

- ✓ **Approach the person from the front.** Tell him who you are.
- ✓ **Call the person by name.**
- ✓ **Use short, simple words** and sentences.
- ✓ **Ask one question** at a time.
- ✓ **Repeat information and questions.** If the person doesn't respond, wait a moment. Then ask again. Try to rephrase and use other words.
- ✓ **Avoid quizzing.** "Do you remember when...?"
- ✓ **Break down instructions** into clear, simple steps.
- ✓ **Avoid confusing expressions.** If you ask the person to "Hop in!" He or she may take that as a literal instruction. Describe the action directly to prevent confusion. "Please come here. Your shower is ready."
- ✓ **Avoid vague words.** Instead of saying "Here it is!"—try saying "Here is your sweater."
- ✓ **Turn negatives into positives.** Instead of saying, "Don't go there," try, "Let's go to the dining room."
- ✓ **Give visual cues.** To help demonstrate the task, while asking him to do the task, point or touch the item you want the person to use. Or, begin the task for the person.



Article continues on page 2

Communication Problems and Solutions at Each AD Stage

Early Stage – Trouble Using and Understanding Words

- ☑ Difficulty finding the right word to say or using familiar words repeatedly.
- ☑ Lose their train of thought or take long pauses between words.
- ☑ Have difficulty following conversations when there are many speakers.
- ☑ Since memory for recent events has declined, they may repeat themselves because they don't remember that they already have said something.

Help a person in the early stage have confidence to use his remaining verbal skills. Gently suggest the word he cannot find or remind him of what he was trying to say when he loses his trend of thought. If he prefers to give himself time to come up with the missing word or idea on his own, wait patiently.

Middle Stage – Trouble Expressing Feelings and Needs

- ☑ Trouble sticking to a subject or forgetting what they were intending to say.
- ☑ May use pat phrases that sound like regular social dialogue, but cover up an inability to say more complex things. "Hello how are you? You look real good" may be repeated to each person they meet.

Avoid calling attention to memory problems and embarrassing him. As the illness progresses, it will have an impact on many aspects of daily life. Communication difficulties may appear more severe because the person may have hearing and vision loss as well as problems with judgment, impulse control, and planning. He may speak loudly on the bus, approach strangers as if they were long-lost relatives, and ask you why that lady over there is so fat.

In the later part of the middle stage the person with dementia may speak haltingly and you may not be able to make sense of what she is trying to say. When the person is among strangers, it may be necessary for caregivers to explain to them what the person is saying and to convey what the others are saying to the person. You are acting as interpreter for both parties. Sometimes people with AD begin to speak only the first language they learned earlier in life.

Late Stage – Gradually Lose Ability to Speak

They may make sounds or moans or facial expressions that give you a clue as to how they are doing. If you think that the person is uncomfortable, try to change his position, offer a drink, play music, or do whatever you think may bring him some comfort. Watch the response to your efforts to see if you are on the right track. Communicate your caring through gentle gestures.

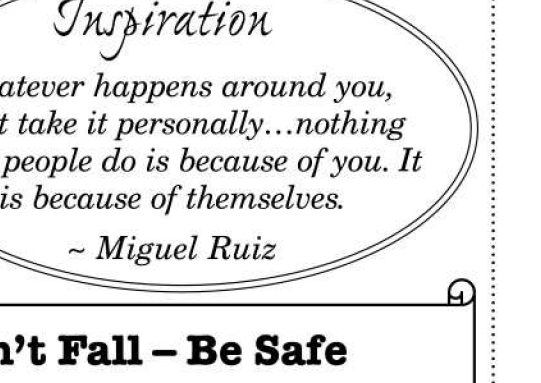
Socializing is Important

Recent research has found that the social part of the brain is the last to be impaired by AD. So it is important to provide opportunities for socializing, such as having a friend visit.

Taking Care of Yourself—Music Can Help

Music is used by specialized therapists to improve a person's physical and mental functioning. Singing, playing instruments, and moving or dancing to music can improve communication, motor skills, and mood. It can be a way caregivers can get enjoyment while benefiting the senior with AD. Music therapy provides:

- ✓ Memory recall for reminiscing
- ✓ Positive changes in mood and stress reduction
- ✓ Management of pain and discomfort without drugs
- ✓ Opportunities to interact socially with others



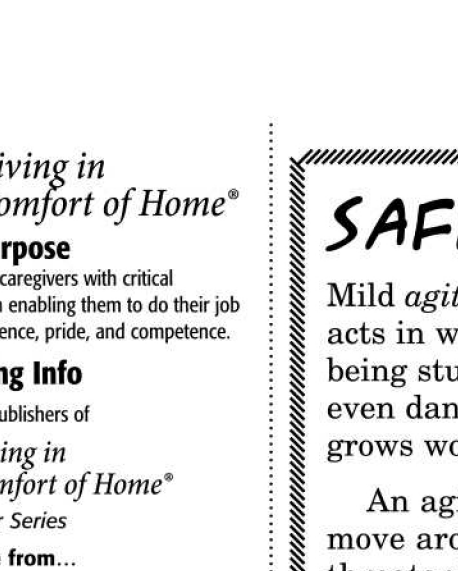
"I regard music therapy as a tool of great power in many neurological disorders – Parkinson's and Alzheimer's – because of its unique capacity to organize or reorganize cerebral function when it has been damaged. . . ." ~ Oliver Sacks, MD

NOTE

One of the biggest challenges to caregivers or family members is to remain patient while coping with the changes or losses in communication. The challenge will increase as the disease progresses.

Live Life Laughing!

Now that I am older I believe in the hereafter.
I know I'm here, but I can't remember what I'm after.



Inspiration

Whatever happens around you, don't take it personally...nothing other people do is because of you. It is because of themselves.
~ Miguel Ruiz

Don't Fall – Be Safe

People with AD are at particularly high risk of falling. Problems with vision, perception and balance, increase as AD advances, making the risk of a fall more likely.

Our Purpose

To provide caregivers with critical information enabling them to do their job with confidence, pride, and competence.

Ordering Info

From the publishers of Caringiving in The Comfort of Home®

CareTrust Series available from... CareTrust Publications LLC

PO Box 10283, Portland, OR 97296 800-565-1533 or www.comfortofhome.com

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SAFETY TIPS—Agitation

Mild *agitation* may seem like a personality change in which a person acts in ways that are uncharacteristic or inappropriate, such as being stubborn or nervous. Severe agitation can be disruptive or even dangerous. Agitated behavior can start in the early stage and grows worse in the middle stage of the illness.

An agitated person may be unable to sleep, pace constantly, move around restlessly, tearing paper, or even cursing or using threatening language.

People with AD are less able to handle changes, uncertainty, and other situations that they could manage when they were well. Being in a strange place may cause agitation. Even a positive event, such as a wedding, can feel overwhelming and can lead to agitation. If the person in your care has had a recent hospitalization or other major life change, expect to see some agitation.

If a person with dementia has recently become agitated for the first time or acts unusual self, the first thing to look for is a medical or physical problem.

NEXT ISSUE... WINTERTIME SAFETY – STORMS

Caregiver Assistance News

QUICK QUIZ

By observing, you will be able to discover the abilities of a person living with Alzheimer's (AD). If we observe what the person *can do and understand*, instead of focusing on what they *no longer can do*, then we can better communicate, support and care for them. Read the issue and answer True or False to the questions below.

1. As much as 90 percent of our communication is nonverbal. T F
2. "Aphasia" is a word for problems with language: it can affect speaking, understanding speech, reading, and writing. T F
3. Keeping eye contact will not help communicating with a person with AD. T F
4. Communication problems get progressively worse over the course of the illness, until verbal communication becomes virtually impossible. T F
5. While people with AD continue to be able to read, they eventually do not understand what they are reading. T F
6. People with AD do not have difficulty following conversations when there are many speakers. T F
7. In the late stage, people with AD gradually lose their ability to speak and may make sounds or moans or facial expressions. T F
8. Music is used by specialized therapists to improve a person's physical and mental functioning. T F
9. To help demonstrate a task, point or touch the item you want the person to use while asking him to do the task. T F
10. Communication difficulties may appear more severe because the person may have hearing and vision loss as well as problems with judgment, impulse control, and planning. T F

Name _____ Signature _____ Date _____

NOVEMBER 2016 EVENTS

You are not alone ... Please join us at one of the following sessions

~ "FREE" Family Caregiver Support Groups and Educational Trainings ~

ALZHEIMER'S SUPPORT GROUP

WHEN: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 1ST
TIME: 6:00 p.m.
WHERE: Y.W.C.A.
ADDR.: 4601 Corona Drive, Corpus Christi
PHONE: (361) 883-3935 or 1-800-817-5743

WHEN: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8TH
TIME: 6:00 p.m.
WHERE: Woodbridge Nursing & Rehab Center
ADDR.: 600 So. Hillside Dr., Beeville
PHONE: (361) 358-8880

WHEN: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10TH
TIME: 3:00 p.m.
WHERE: Mirador
ADDR.: 5857 Timbergate Drive, Corpus Christi
PHONE: (361) 883-3935 or 1-800-817-5743

WHEN: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 15TH
TIME: 9:30 a.m.
WHERE: General Caregiver Support Group
WHAT: Brookdale (Formerly Mountain Residence)
ADDR.: 6410 Meadow Vista, Corpus Christi
PHONE: (361) 980-0206
FACILITATOR: Anita Valles

WHEN: WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 16TH
TIME: 3:00 p.m.
WHERE: Alice Public Library
ADDR.: 401 E. Third Street, Alice
PHONE: (361) 883-3935 or 1-800-817-5743

WHEN: THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17TH
TIME: 10:30 a.m.
WHERE: Lexington Place Nursing & Rehab
ADDR.: 1661 West Yoakum, Aransas Pass
PHONE: (361) 758-7686

WHEN: MONDAY, NOVEMBER 21ST
TIME: 12:00 p.m.
WHERE: Lindale Center/ Caregiver SOS
ADDR.: 3133 Swantner St., Corpus Christi
PHONE: (361) 826-2343

WHEN: CANCELLED DUE TO HOLIDAY
TIME: 4:30 p.m.
WHERE: Kieberg County Nursing & Rehab
ADDR.: 316 General Cavazos Blvd., Kingsville
PHONE: (361) 883-3935 or 1-800-817-5743

GRANDPARENTS AND OTHER RELATIVES RAISING CHILDREN - GRRC

WHEN: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 22ND
TIME: 10:00 a.m. — 11:00 a.m.
WHERE: Greenwood Senior Center
ADDR.: 4040 Greenwood Drive, Corpus Christi
PHONE: (361) 883-3935 or 1-800-817-5743

WHAT: (*) EVENING SUPPORT GROUP
WHEN: Thursday November 17th
TIME: 6:00 p.m. — 7:00 p.m.
WHERE: First United Methodist Church
ADDR.: 900 South Shoreline Blvd.; Corpus Christi
2nd floor Rm #216 / parking & entrance behind church
PHONE: (361) 334-2255
FACILITATED/PRESENTED BY: MCH FAMILY OUTREACH
(*) Please call if you will bring your grandchild(ren)

For additional information contact:
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Office: (361) 883-3935 ext - 5153
Toll Free: 1-800-817-5743
email: felipa@cbcogaaa.org

~ OR ~
MONZERATT SILGERO
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Toll Free: 1-800-817-5743
email: nfcsp@cbcogaaa.org

Facilitators are provided by:
THE NATIONAL FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT PROGRAM
a program of:



SCHMIEDING METHOD PHYSICAL SKILLS TRAINING CLASSES

~ FREE 12 hour class ~

CLASS DATES (each session is 4 hours):
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 04th
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 11th
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 18th

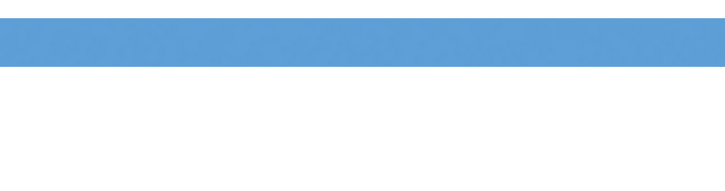
TIME: 12:30 p.m. ~ 4:30 p.m.

WHERE: Del Mar College
Health Science Building
Room #1-115
401 Old Brownsville Road
Corpus Christi, Texas

MUST PRE-REGISTER BY NOV. 1st

Call to reserve your space:
(361) 883-3935
or **1-800-817-5743**

The Schmieding Method Physical Skills Training Classes is a community partnership provided by:



(*) COURSE CONTENT INCLUDES:

- ◆ Information on Infection Control
- ◆ Skin Control
- ◆ Incontinence Management
- ◆ Nutrition
- ◆ Body Mechanics
- ◆ Mobility
- ◆ Caregiver Stress
- ◆ Safety
- ◆ Activities of Daily Living
- ◆ Transferring
- ◆ Wheelchair Use

(*) SEE BACK PAGE FOR MORE DETAILS

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Alzheimer & Related Dementias Conference

You are cordially invited to come hear from the experts in this field to find out how to identify and assist persons who may be experiencing the symptoms of Alzheimer's or Dementia.

- ◆ Dementia Conversations—Alzheimer's Association
- ◆ Caregiver Resources & Respite—Felipa Wilmot, Area Agency on Aging

Information Booths on site with resources for the elderly and their families.

Snacks & Drinks available

November 10, 2016,
10 a.m.—1 p.m.

Mary Dinn Reynolds Hall, Alice First United Methodist Church
111 N. Adams, Alice, TX 78332 (Education Bldg.)

RSVP to: felipa@cbcogaaa.org
361.883.3935

* Vendors—limited number of spaces—contact Felipa Wilmot for availability.

From our family to yours... Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year!!!

A program of the WellMed Charitable Foundation

Register online at www.caregiverteleconnection.org or call 866.390.6491 Toll Free

Registration required at least 24 hours in advance

Free Telephone Learning Sessions

Call. Learn. Share.

Date Time Topic

Monday, November 14th 1:00 pm Eastern 12:00 pm Central 10:00 am Pacific **Managing Conflict: Using Techniques of "Aikido" Style with Andy B. Crocker, M.S.** Learn about the power of communication using skills designed to help caregivers break out of habitual reactions to threatening, emotional, or stressful reactions. Using techniques called "Aikido," work with the other person's energy to reduce the conflict. This topic generated a lot of excitement at a caregiver conference in north Texas. Sponsored by the North Central Texas Caregiver Teleconnection

Tuesday, November 29th 12:00 pm Eastern 11:00 am Central 10:00 am Mountain 9:00 am Pacific **Dealing with the Danger of Depression with Evelyn Greb, LCSW** Listen to Evelyn Greb, LCSW, discuss the danger of depression. Depression is common among family caregivers, and must be recognized and addressed. Evelyn will give important tips and techniques for helping with the condition.

Wednesday, December 7th 3:00 pm Eastern 2:00 pm Central 1:00 pm Mountain 12:00 pm Pacific **Back to the Future of Aging with Carol Zernial, MA** For the past 30 years, professionals who work with the elderly and with caregivers have been preparing for the aging of the baby boomers, the 74 million people who are now turning 65 at a rate of 10,000 every day. It's time to go back to that future of aging and see if we are indeed ready. What did we get right over the past 30 years? What do we need to rethink? And what is new that we need to consider?

Monday, December 12th 1:00 pm Eastern 12:00 pm Central 11:00 am Mountain 10:00 am Pacific **Managing the Holidays: Caregiving, Family, & Celebrations with Zanda Hilger, LPC** Join in an open discussion about what you look forward to during the holidays and what are the challenges. Learn from and share the experiences of other caregivers. Sponsored by the North Central Texas Caregiver Teleconnection