

## Tips for a Successful Memory Care Visit

When someone you love has Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia, you may not know what to say or do. You may feel awkward or not know what to expect as it gets worse or you might feel anxious about seeing them in a memory care community. However, one of the most important things that you can do is keep visiting and stay involved in their life. While they may not always recognize you or remember very many details, they still need to socialize and be involved.

### What You Can Do to Ensure a Successful Visit

1. **Keep things simple.** When you visit, it is important to keep the environment comfortable, calm and quiet. Plan activities that will not overwhelm or frustrate anyone, too much stimulation will overwhelm and agitate them and make the visit unsuccessful.
2. **Remember your loved one may respond differently than usual.** They may lose their train of thought or not be able to choose the right words. They may not be able to speak in a way that makes sense to you or may begin speaking in their native language. You need to remember that they do not have control over this and you must be patient.
3. **Do not take it personally if your loved one lashes out at you.** They do not have control over what they do or how they feel. You need to be patient and comfort them the best that you can. They do not mean anything against you, they are just frustrated that things aren't going how they like or that they can't communicate with you. Let them know you love them and are happy to be there. Let them know you are there for them.
4. **Try not to criticize or argue.** By arguing and critiquing them, you will frustrate them and they will likely shut down or become angry with you. Be patient and understanding.
5. **You will need to plan activities according to their mood, feelings and abilities.** Your loved one may not be able to do all of the things they used to or they may not enjoy the activities they once did, you will need to tailor what you do based on that. Try to keep activities from being too difficult or too stimulating in order to keep your visit going well.

### Ideas to Get Your Loved One Involved

- **Set up some visits.** Being visited by a loved pet or even grandchildren can help to bring happiness to their faces. Pets or children have been known to spark reactions in those with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia and some patients have been found to actually talk, even in the latest stages of their disease.
- **Listen to music.** Music is often associated with feelings and memories, this can often spark a conversation about what they were doing when the song was popular or how they were feeling. Sometimes, your loved one may end up singing along or dancing. Consider taking them to a show or performance if they are able.
- **Get active.** Try gardening or exercising together. Doing this can help your loved one focus on the activities that they can still do and can help to boost their self-esteem.
- **Create something.** There are many ways to connect with the one you love, however, creating a work of art may be one of the simplest. If they are having trouble communicating their feelings or expressing themselves, art can help to fill in the gaps and can give them a new purpose and sense of self.

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- **Reminisce.** Even if your loved one doesn't remember everything exactly, talking about memories or going through photographs can help to bring about some recognition. Once they remember something, keep the conversation going. Filling a box with items that help to trigger their memory is an activity that is not only helpful for you but an opportunity to help create successful visits in the future.

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