

Elderly Care Series
Communication with Elderly Persons with Dementia

The film is co-produced by the Department of Health and the Social Welfare Department as reference material for the Training Scheme for Foreign Domestic Helpers in Elderly Care.

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Mary, my friend Mrs Chan is coming
Please prepare some fruits
brew a pot of tea
and tidy up the place
Sure, Madam

Hi Mrs Chan. Hi Annie
Mary, Mrs Cheung

Mrs Chan and Mrs Cheung are chitchatting

Where is my watch?
In the room

Mrs Chan and Mrs Cheung are chitchatting

Where is my watch?
It is in the room

Mrs Chan and Mrs Cheung are chitchatting

Where is my watch?
I told you that it is in the room!
Madam, please do not be angry
Sir, the watch is in the room

He has dementia
and his memory is getting worse
It is not easy for me to communicate with him now
Take your time. We should be more patient
Take a break and have some tea first

No worries. Relax
Annie, do you know how I can take better care of Sir?
Do you still remember the instructor's key points
about communicating with elderly persons with dementia?
Sometimes, if we speak too fast or in a high-pitched voice
it is easy to cause misunderstanding

They may feel like they are being scolded
Also, too much information and unnecessary gestures may mislead or distract them
Oh right! The instructor also taught us to pay more attention to the environment around us

First, we need to assist the elderly persons to hear more clearly
Some environmental factors may affect communication
For example, elderly persons will get distracted easily when it is too noisy
Turn off the radio or TV when necessary
We can also encourage elderly persons with hearing difficulty to use hearing aids
Speak slowly. Do not shout at them
and try not to raise your voice or pitch
These skills can help them hear more clearly

Okay, we need to get changed
It is time for the follow-up consultation

Sometimes we may forget to sit face to face with the elderly persons when we are busy with the housework
Try to maintain eye contact

Are we going to the follow-up today?
Let me turn on the lights and read clearly

Both expression and body language are important in communication
Make sure there is adequate light for the elderly persons to see your facial expression and gestures clearly
Also, ask only one question at a time
It is even better to provide options
For example, instead of asking "which coat would you like to wear?"
You can ask

Do you want to wear the red or the green coat?
This one

Remember to be concise and clear
with only one message at a time
These help us express more effectively
For example, do not just say "put on the clothes", instead you can say

Sir, put in your left arm first
and then the right arm
Be aware of your facial expression and body gestures
Nodding and smiling can encourage the elderly persons

I forgot where we are going again
We are going to the hospital for follow-up consultation
Your drugs have run out

When necessary, we can use real objects to help them understand

do not speak too fast

and repeat it when necessary

so as to allow them to hear more clearly

Last but not least, remember to be patient

Do not rush

Give them some time to express themselves

There are other videos in elderly care

on the websites of the Department of Health and the Social Welfare Department

Let's watch them together and familiarise ourselves with what we have learnt!

Disclaimer

The skills in this film serve as general reference and are for educational purposes. They may not be applicable to all elderly persons under every situation. Please consult health care professionals in case of doubt over the applicability of the skills under specific situations.

Department of Health Elderly Health Service Website
www.elderly.gov.hk

Social Welfare Department
Training Scheme for Foreign Domestic Helpers in Elderly Care
www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_elderly/sub_psfhd/