

# Practical ways to support a person with dementia



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These tips aim to help a person with dementia maintain their independence, confidence and self esteem:

- Try and do tasks with them, not for them.
- Reinforce familiar activities they used to do and enjoy, eg. setting the table, simple cooking, gardening and other recreations.
- Repetitive, non-productive behaviour could be re-channelled into doing other hobbies such as knitting, word searches, puzzles and colouring books.
- Cook their favourite childhood foods.
- Purchase several identical items of clothing as it might be favourable for them to wear something familiar.
- Limit their wardrobe to items suited to the season.
- Put picture/word signs on room doors and on cupboards.
- Install a brightly coloured toilet seat (which reminds people with cognitive loss what the purpose of the toilet is)
- They may benefit from using an old fashioned plate and cup like they had years ago.
- Play or sing familiar songs from their past (eg 1960s songs or hymns)
- A black doormat may look like a hole to a person with dementia. This may cause them to refuse to enter a shop with a black mat, but at home, this could prevent them wandering away!
- Make time for regular exercise to minimise restlessness. Keep daily activity within a safe area, eg. a fenced garden/rooms with stop signs on the gate/door.
- Some people with dementia benefit from having a toy doll to care for or a lifelike toy dog or cat to stroke.
- Smile, use kind facial expressions and maintain eye contact when talking with them. If they are argumentative, give caring, non-defensive, reassuring responses.
- Don't correct a person with dementia if they say something wrong. If your 90 year old mother with dementia tells you she had breakfast with her grandmother this morning, ask her what they had to eat. Don't tell your mother her grandmother is dead, which would only lead to grief over a "new" death for your mum.
- Textured blankets and fiddle toys may be comforting.
- Dehydration can lead to confusion, so ensure they are drinking enough, as they may forget to do so.

