



7 Mindful Steps: Successful Engagement

The way that we approach people, guide them, listen, and respond to them influences the success of our conversations and interactions. Here are seven steps for mindful connection that help to create transitions, routine, and a sense of purpose. Make compassion your primary intention, and use the following practical approaches to interaction when caring for someone with dementia:

1. Introduce yourself to the person and provide prompting information.

"Hi, I'm Joshua, and I will be your caregiver today." Or, "Hi Mom, it's your son Josh. I'm here for a visit."

2. When communicating, make eye contact and communicate at the person's eye-level.

3. Give a compliment and then invite the person to help or participate.

"I could really use your help with this, will you help me?" Or, "I bet you're great at this activity. Would you like to join us?"

4. When offering choices, provide no more than two or three options.

"Would you like to join us for morning exercise or would you rather read the newspaper?"

5. Provide the person with something to hold for comfort.

The sensory experience of holding something releases dopamine, which can help the person focus. Holding an object also improves engagement and focus.

During activities, try offering a small pillow or another favorite object.

6. Sit groups in a circle or side-by-side.

Everyone should be a front-row learner. If you sit side-by-side with someone with dementia, sit on the side of their dominant hand.

7. Provide a clear ending to activities by thanking the participants and creating an emotional and physical connection.

"Thank you for singing with me today!" Offer each person a handshake or a hug.