

## Living Well with Dementia Caregiver Tips on Communication



### Why is communication causing frustration and anxiety?

- As dementia progresses it will become more difficult to remember the right words to use.
- The individual may lose their train of thought and become confused.
- It's difficult to follow conversations, which can cause frustration and anxiety as they try to understand what's being discussed.
- It becomes difficult for an individual living with dementia to learn new phrases or expressions.
- The individual living with dementia may feel anxious if they cannot communicate their wants, needs or concerns.
- In later stages of dementia, the individual may only be able to speak their native language (French, Spanish, German, etc.).
- It is more difficult to hold several ideas in their head and carry on a conversations. One topic, one conversation at a time is best to avoid confusion and frustrations.

Communication for an individual living with dementia will become more difficult as the disease progresses. There are two types of barriers you may come across while communicating with the individual; expressing themselves to others and difficulty understanding what people are saying to them. It's important to be conscious that they may be able to express more than they can understand.

### How You Can Help

- **Never assume** what the individual may be able to understand.
- **Make sure they hear you** as hearing acuity may decline later in life.
- **Use a lower tone.** A raised pitch can be taken as a nonverbal signal that someone is upset.
- **Remove any additional noises or distractions.**
- **Use short sentences** that are easy to understand.
- **Ask only one question at a time** and limit decision making questions. Instead of asking "would you like to have a turkey or ham sandwich for lunch now or would you like to eat later?" ask "would you like your ham sandwich now?"
- **Ensure the individual is only doing one task at a time.** Trying to remember several tasks can cause an adverse reaction.
- **Speak slowly, wait for a response.** Sometimes it takes a little longer to process what they would like to express back to you.

**For more information about caregiver tips or program availability through Living Well with Dementia, please contact Easterseals Homemakers & Health Services at 603.335.1770.**