

Waterford Place

Memory Care

Teepa's Approach

At Waterford Place Memory Care a big part of the dementia training that we provide our staff comes from Teepa Snow and her positive care approaches. Teepa's care strategies and techniques look at what is known about brain function and changes that happen with various conditions and integrate that information with therapeutic approaches. These approaches foster positive outcomes, encourage alteration of in task expectations, and create supportive environments that match retained and available abilities of people living with various forms of brain change and deterioration. She teaches about the value of connection when primary verbal communication and interaction abilities are altered. Her teaching style is extraordinarily unique in that she is able to accurately demonstrate and model for her students and audience the struggle and challenges dementia creates for all parties involved.

5 Tips for Communicating Better

When a *person is living with dementia (PLwD)*, communication can sometimes become difficult. As a person's brain is changing, their ability to comprehend and process vocabulary can decrease. Learning how to get started at communicating better can therefore become critically important. We sometimes underestimate how soon issues with communication start, and may miss the early signals that someone is probably struggling a bit more than they used to.

Every one of us has been in a situation where we couldn't think of the right word, and so had to pause. In a healthy brain, the normal reaction to when someone offers you a word is: oh good, now we can move on. Whereas when someone is living with dementia, suddenly jumping in with a word can cause confusion, as now they have to look at that word and figure out if that's the word they were looking for. And when you factor in memory problems, it's probable they'll have a hard time remembering what their word was in the first place (Teepa Snow).

HOPE

for Dementia is here

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Teepa Snow, Positive Approach to Care

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To help you get started with communicating better, we have included five tips from Teepa Snow's Positive Approach to Care that you may want to think about, be aware of, and practice:

- **Matching your pace to theirs:** If your PLwD is beginning to slow down, Teepa suggests slowing yourself down a bit as well. By practicing being more comfortable with pauses and not rushing in right away to make suggestions, you are giving the PLwD an extra moment to possibly recall the word they were looking for.
- **Reflection:** If the PLwD continues to struggle with word-finding, rather than adding to what he or she said, it can be very helpful to first repeat back to them what you heard. By doing so, the PLwD can hear what they've said so far, which can help them continue the conversation. For example, if a person says I'm looking for something to...uhhh..., you might give the person a moment, and then assist by saying So you're looking for something you could...pause, and see if your PLwD can fill in the blank.
- **This or something else:** If your PLwD is still struggling to find a word, you might ask: Are you looking for something to drink, or something else? By offering one specific word and one overly general word, you're less likely to distract the PLwD from the word they're trying to think of, but still assist them in communicating with you as you've given them two words he or she can say.
- **Tell me more about it (Circumlocution):** If you're still unsure what your PLwD is trying to communicate, try asking: Can you tell me more about it? With this question, what you're really asking for is do you have other words you could use aside from the one you're looking for? And if they use these other words to talk around the word they're missing (a process called circumlocution), it can help you as a care partner figure out what they're trying to communicate.
- **Visuals:** When word-processing abilities decrease as the brain changes, pointing at a related object when talking to your PLwD can help increase mutual understanding. For example, if you're trying to find out what your PLwD would like to drink, you could ask Would you like a coffee [pointing at a coffee mug], or something else? Being able to see the object you're asking about will likely help your PLwD process your question, and make communication a little bit easier (Teepa Snow).

Reference Source: Teepa Snow, Positive Approach to Care communication tips (https://teepasnow.com/teepa_snow_tips_for_communicating_better/)

Questions? Would you like a tour?

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