

*Elder Tips*  
*Communicating with a Loved One with Alzheimer's or Related Dementias*  
*...provided to you as a courtesy by Maryhill Manor of Niagara*

The Alzheimer's victim often responds in ways you do not expect, and may even become angry or frustrated without cause. The ways we talk with that person, even our tone of voice can lead to a response WE do not understand. We can at times forget that this person is an Adult, and through our concern may say and do things in ways which the Alzheimer's victim see as upsetting.

When visiting with the Alzheimer's victim make a conscious effort to remember that they are an adult, interested in adult conversations and adult activities. Be aware of every aspect of how you present yourself, including your voice tone, posture, facial expression, and movements. Speak calmly, in a warm inviting voice, and remain welcoming with your facial expressions and posture.

Eliminate distractions such as radio, TV, or other noisy conversation so they can focus on what you have to say. If their response seems unusual don't assume the person doesn't hear you and speak louder, but instead change the wording and keep it simple. Let that person guide your conversation, and bring in subjects slowly which are familiar to them. Take an interest they have and use that as your conversation starter. Don't be surprised if you rehash things you have heard before, stories from the past, or family long since grown. Allow plenty of time for a response. The Alzheimer's victim does not process information quickly and it may take a bit of time for them to respond. Be comfortable with that silence.

If they share mistaken information, don't correct them. These persons have impaired reasoning and it is highly unlikely that you can talk or reason them out of that mistaken idea. Arguing is futile because they truly believe what they are saying, and trying to correct them leads to anger and agitation.

Living with a person who suffers from Alzheimer's or related dementia can be a challenge, and we highly recommend that care givers find a support group to join. Northeast Wisconsin's Niagara Alzheimer's support group meets at Maryhill of Niagara the third Monday of each month. There are other support groups in our area which can provide care givers with much needed information and the support of others who can assist. Other sources of information include the Internet, and books by Naomi Feil, the recognized authority for Alzheimer's care giving information. Ms. Feil has written several excellent books about "Validation Therapy" as well as books explaining the process of this disease. Your local Alzheimer's Association is the place you can start.

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