EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH INDIVIDUAL WITH COGNITIVE ISSUES

Tips for improved communications:

- Make just one request at a time.
- Speak slowly with good diction.
- Allow time for the individual to respond to your question or request.
- Use many of the five senses with the individual: sight, smell, touch, taste, sound.
- Maintain eye contact.
- Assume a comfortable, relaxed posture to make the individual at ease.
- Identify and reflect the individual’s concerns, “I see you are uncomfortable…”
- Use simple, direct statements or requests.

Using Redirection to Improve Communications

Redirection is an intention method of refocusing the individual to remain calm, cooperative, content and safe. Often, individuals with cognitive issues may be frustrated or agitated due to their inability to effectively communicate or have their needs met. It is key to enter the individual’s reality, approach in a calm manner, and communicate your desire to help.

- Present options: “Would you like this or this?”
- Compliment: “My that’s a beautiful sweater!”
- Request Help: “Can you please help me fold these towels?”
- Helpful Distractions: Food, drink, reminiscent stories, music, humor
- Validate: “You look worried.”
- Distract: “Let’s look over there…” “Let’s plan to do that later. In the meantime, …”
- Redirect: “That coffee smells good. Do you want a cup?”

Common Delusions in Individuals with Dementia

- Accusations of infidelity
- Persons or images from TV are real
- Fear of abandonment
- Accusations of theft of one’s property
- Claims of impersonation (spouse is imposter)
- Current residence is not one’s home
- Misidentification of familiar persons