



February 2023

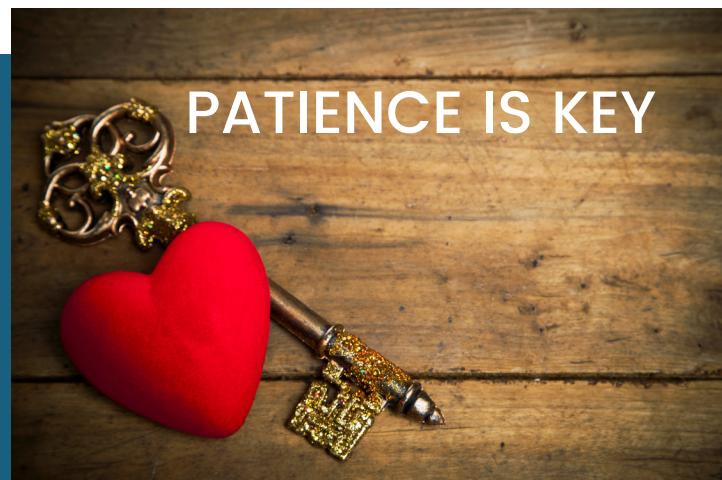
## Meaningful Communication

A good relationship starts with good communication. -Unknown



“ Dementia doesn't rob someone of their dignity; it's our reaction to them that does.  
-Teepa Snow ”

It may feel as though there is nothing more challenging than communicating with a loved one with cognitive impairment, but with a bit of patience, understanding and good listening skills, communication can be rewarding and meaningful.



Communicating with a loved one with memory impairment can be difficult because one of the hallmark symptoms of cognitive impairment is difficulty expressing thoughts or ideas and difficulty finding words. Because of these challenges there is the potential for misunderstanding, confusion and frustration on both sides.



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**Here are 9 simple suggestions that we can all do to make communication and interactions meaningful and less stressful:**

1. Avoid loud areas and distractions, bring the person to a quiet area without television and loud noise. Busy environments can be very stressful.
2. Make eye contact
3. Use simple language and allow enough time for the person to answer. Ask open ended questions rather than specific questions that may be stressful. Rather than: "What did you have for lunch today?" You could ask: "Did you enjoy your lunch?"
4. Speak slowly and clearly.
5. Avoid trying to correct or argue. Rather, accept what is said and let it be.
6. Offer clear cut directions for tasks and clear, step by step directions rather than lengthy instructions.
7. Use humor and a light-hearted approach with a warm smile, this is always welcome!
8. Let the person with dementia complete their thoughts, do not rush them.



9. The gentle touch of the hand can be reassuring and calming during conversation.

The team at Rizzi Mental Health Associates is available to help your community and families learn effective strategies for communication that can decrease stress and strengthen relationships at all stages of dementia. Do not hesitate to contact any member of our team.



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