

Demand on you CARE: Communication Challenges: Vision, Hearing and Speech

Chapter 4 : Effective Communication Skills

ELDER009

Overview

In this chapter, we will discuss:

Tips for caregivers :

- **8 ways to promote communication with older adults**
- **Communication skills for older adults with special needs**
 - **People with dementia**
 - **Frail older adults in residential care home**

Tips for older adults :

- **6 Communication strategies for older adults with hearing impairment**

Effective communication skills between caregivers and the older adults

- When caregivers get along with the older adults, a good two-way communication can reduce misunderstandings and conflicts, maintain a good relationship with each other, and help reduce life pressure and keep the mood happy.
- Therefore, both caregivers and older adults need to learn effective communication skills.

Tips for caregivers— 8 ways to promote communication with older adults

1.Active listening

- Listening patiently and giving enough time for older adults to express can reduce their loneliness



Urge the older adults to respond, leaving them with insufficient time to express.

2. The speed and intonation should match the needs of the older adults

- **The speed and intonation should match the needs of the older adults**

- Speak slowly to the older adult
- When you meet an older adult with poor hearing, you can speak on the side with better hearing
- Pay attention to your intonation when speaking loudly, and don't make the older adult misunderstand that you are scolding him/her
- If the older adult wears a hearing aid, ask him/her to wear it before talking



- Speak too fast
- Perceive the older adult cannot hear clearly, and deliberately speak louder

3. Guide the older adults to answer with yes-no question

- Give simple choices

- Such as:

Caregiver asked, “Do you want to eat apple or orange?”

Older adult replied, “Apple.”

Caregiver asked, “I will cut an apple for you, ok?”

Older adult said, “Okay!”



- Too many open-ended questions
- Such as, “What do you want to eat?”

4. Use simple and specific words

- Keep sentences short
- Each sentence contains only one message
- Emphasize and repeat key points if necessary

- Such as:

Caregiver asked, “Shall we visit aunt today?”

Older adult said, “Yes!”

Caregiver asked, “Remember to bring your Octopus,
Octopus.” (Emphasize and repeat key points)



- Long sentences and contain too much information
- Such as:
Caregiver said, “Last time you said that you wanted to see aunt. The weather is fine today and there is no traffic jam on Tuen Mun Highway. Uncle said that aunt is free today, why don’t we take the bus to visit her today?”

5. Use adult tone

- When communicating with the older adults, please use "adult tone", although simple sentences are encouraged
- Avoid using the tone that speaks to small children.



- Use the tone that speaks to small children.
 - Such as, “Buy nice things”, “Wear nice clothes”, “Be good”

6. Avoid using too many pronouns

- Avoid using pronouns, such as "he", "them", "here", "that"
- For example, "Your phone is on the dining table."



- Use too many pronouns
- For example, "Your **stuff** is just **there!**"

7. Non-verbal communication skills

- Attitude: friendly, kind, sincere, respectful
- Eye contact: Face to face with an older adult, maintain eye contact and be sure to get their attention
- Posture and behavior: Such as nodding, proper gestures, proper seating arrangement
- Touch: When chatting, hold the hand of older adult more often to make him/her feel safe; nodding and tapping on the shoulder are all positive encouragement and contact



- An impatient, careless, or dismissive attitude
- No eye contact with the older adult, talking to them while walking around/doing your own things

8. Environment and tools to promote communication

- Keeping the environment quiet and reducing noise can help concentrate
 - If the older adult is watching TV and it is very loud, the caregiver can turn down the volume before talking to him/her
- If the older adult has vision/hearing impairment, remind him/her to wear glasses and hearing aids first



- Talk to the older adult in a noisy environment

For example:
TV and radio sounds,
noisy restaurants

Communication skills for older adults with special needs:

1. People with dementia
2. Frail older adults in residential care home

Skills for communicating with older adults having dementia

When caring older adults with dementia, be aware of the following 10 communication tips:

1. Start the conversation by addressing the older adult and introducing yourself by saying your name. Call him/her the title he/she likes.
2. Make enough eye contact to let them know that you are talking to him/her
3. Smile more and give proper physical contact, such as light touch of arm, hand or shoulder.
4. Always speak concisely, straightforwardly and in an understandable way, use simple and direct sentences.
5. Ask only one question at a time and allow enough time to response.

Skills for communicating with older adults having dementia

6. Always be gentle
7. Give more cues and praise
8. Don't criticize and point out his/her mistakes directly. Avoid arguing with him/her
9. Pay more attention to non-verbal messages
10. For better communication and understanding, make good use of material objects, intonation, pictures, words, expressions, gestures, etc.



Communication skills with frail older adults in residential care home

- Frail older adults in residential care homes may be prone to feeling unhappy due to their physical disability.
- If family visits are less frequent, the older adults may feel more lonely.

Common emotional manifestations:

- Silence
- Upset
- May be unkind
- Easy to lose temper due to trivial matters

It is understandable for residents to have these emotional manifestations. What can the caregivers do?

Communication skills with frail older adults in residential care

The caregivers need to:

- Be patient and keep calm
- Smile more and give proper physical touch, e.g. light touch of arm, hand or shoulder.
- Try to show understanding, toleration and consideration
- Respect
- Give support
- Seek support from senior colleagues in case of emergency

Tips for older adults-

6 Communication strategies for older adults with hearing impairment

Older adults with hearing impairment can facilitate communication by using the following strategies:

1. Show your needs

- For example, the older adult can say, “I don't hear well. If I can't hear you clearly, please repeat.”

2. Chat in a quiet environment

- If you meet a friend in a noisy environment and want to chat with him/her, you can take the initiative to propose a quieter place

3. Offer your advice

- If the other person speaks in a way that makes you hard to hear, such as speaking too fast, you can advise him/her speak slowly

6 Communication strategies for older adults with hearing impairment

4. Don't be afraid to clarify

- Don't be afraid to clarify when you're not sure what the other person is saying. Let others help you make sure you heard correctly

- For example:

Granddaughter said, "I will take you to mum's later, wait for me at home."

Older adult, "Are we going to your grandma's?" (Try repeating to confirm that it is correct)

Granddaughter, "No, go to my mum's."

Older adults said, "Oh, go to your mum's, I wait for you at home." (Try repeating to confirm that it is correct)

Granddaughter said, "Yeah, that's right!"

6 Communication strategies for older adults with hearing impairment

5. Ask questions if you are not clear

- When in doubt, don't be afraid of trouble. Use some questions to clarify.
- For example: "Where?", "When?", "Why?"

6. Sum up the main points

- If the other person makes a long speech, and the older adult is worried that he/she can't hear clearly, he/she can try to sum up the main points, to make sure it is correct.

- End of Chapter 4 -

Extended Reading

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