

Ten top tips for... *communication*

Dementia Friendly Churches are inclusive, accessible and community focused. These tips offer simple advice about how to talk and listen to people with dementia. Dementia friendly communication is the basis for the intentional relationships that create the sense of belonging we all need as part of a church community.

1. Focus on the person

Remember there is more to a person than the dementia, when talking try to empathise with the person's views and experience, remembering that sincere listening helps to dignify someone.

2. Get the person's full attention

Before starting a conversation gain the person's attention and wait until it is directed towards you before talking to them.

3. Listen carefully

Don't dismiss what a person with dementia is saying. Take the time to listen carefully so you can better understand how the person is feeling and what they are trying to say.

4. Ask simple questions

Asking questions show that you are taking an interest in what someone is saying. Try not to ask too many questions as this might be confusing. Ask one question at a time and wait for the person to answer before going to the next.

5. Speak clearly and write simply

Think about what you are going to say. Don't rush the conversation as it can be difficult for people with dementia to follow what is being said. Ensure written communications are of a reasonable print size and avoid inappropriately complex language, maximising the use of images.

6. Check if you do not understand

If you cannot understand what someone is saying, just ask the person to repeat it and perhaps seek clarification. You can do this by summarising what the person has said and reflect this back to them.

7. Keep calm

Be yourself and don't worry if something goes wrong. Stay calm and try to end the conversation in a relaxed manner. What counts most is your sincere interest in them as a person.

8. Read body language

Often people with dementia will use their body to make others know what they are saying. Look closely at their hands and face when they are talking.

9. Keep eye contact

Look and direct what you are saying to the person with dementia. When communicating, try to stay on the same physical level for example, if the person is sitting down sit down as well.

10. Respect personal space

Try not to stand too close to someone or stand over a person with dementia as this may make them feel uncomfortable.