



## 5 Steps to Engagement in Dementia Care

“The art of caring for an Alzheimer’s patient is not to underestimate the true capacity of the patient to comprehend and communicate. To do so robs the individual of remaining competence. At the same time to overestimate the true capacity will lead to frustration on the part of both the caregiver and the patient.” Clem 1990

Mastering the *ART* of engagement in dementia care includes gaining or acquire knowledge of, or skill, in these 5 steps.

1. Awareness of attitudes, fears, stereotypes
  - Creating the “I CAN” list
  - Understanding behavior as communication ABCs
  - Understanding the dementia journey
  - “Because I don’t remember, doesn’t mean I don’t have memories.”
  - Know the Person-REALLY
    - Values
    - Lifelong habits and routines
    - Involvement patterns
    - Accomplishments
    - Experiences that have had an emotional impact
    - Important relationships
    - Interests and preferences
2. Understand how to structure opportunities to use the “brain that remains”
  - Create opportunities to use social skills
  - Use music consistently
  - Offer opportunities to sort and categorize
  - Integrate movement in all interactions
  - Create opportunities for the expression of thoughts, opinions and creativity
  - Offer opportunities to use retained procedural memory skills
  - Provide written cues in simple format
  - Create opportunities to read
  - Use a variety of sensory cues
3. Understand strategies to SIMPLIFY, ADAPT and CHANGE THE RULES
  - Simplify by breaking down the steps
  - Adapt by modifying the materials or environment
  - Change the rules by creating new ways to use meaningful objects
  - Use an approach that reinforces the values and identity of the person



- Use personalized “materials” OBJECTS of special value
  - Use “universal themes” when simplifying activities such as patriotic, religious, nature, animals, beauty
4. Understand and demonstrate effective verbal and non-verbal engagement strategies
- Use scripts, stories and declarative sentences to initiate interaction
  - Trigger thoughts using “first person” approach
  - Structure the visitation environment
    - Put something in their hands
    - Take something to look at
    - Wear something (scarf) to spark a memory
  - Identify a quote, saying or cliché related to a topic of interest
  - Tell a joke or funny story, sing a song related to past interest
  - Simplify questions to match cognitive abilities
    - Use YES or NO questions
    - Use fill in the blank statements or questions
    - Ask open ended questions
    - Ask “Opinion Poll” questions
    - Use ADVICE questions in conversation
  - Use a variety of sensory triggers. Identify a prop to be used to utilize each of the 5 senses, smell, touch, hear, see, taste
  - Tell 5 fun facts about the topic
  - List 10-15 words associated with the topic to use in activities
  - Identify 5-10 actions or movements related to topics of interest
  - Show artwork representative of lifelong pursuits and preferences
  - Approach the interaction using a calm, non-rushed demeanor, at eye level, communicating one message at a time (using 5-7 syllables), in a comfortable environment with few distractions, using non-verbal cues and pictures. Use facial expressions and gestures that convey empathy and genuine interest.

ActivTimes provides training on each of the 5 Steps to Engagement in Dementia Care