

Please avoid asking direct questions, even questions such as “Have you seen Ann recently?” or “What did you have for lunch?” Anything requiring a factual answer has the potential to be confusing or distressing. It is amazing what you can find out without asking questions. Instead of ‘Would you like tea or coffee?’ perhaps “Let’s have a cup of tea now.”



Before you visit:

- Find out from the family the person’s favourite topics to help you if conversation is not easy.
- Consider something suitable to take such as a magazine, postcard or a flower catalogue.

At the visit:

- Take off your coat and if possible leave it out of sight.
- Try to appear as if just visiting in an informal way – “just dropping in”, rather than preplanned.
- Wear something bright or colourful.
- Approach from the front, don’t tap on the back/shoulder
- As they look up, smile and greet them as if they have just made your day “How lovely to see you!”
- Sit at the same level.
- Touch or hold their hand if appropriate.
- Speak simply, one comment at a time.
- Stop talking as soon as they start—listen.
- Show interest with body language rather than words.
- Avoid telling them about bad things that have happened to you or to others in the wider world.
- Be fascinated in whatever they appear interested.
- Treat repeated information as if it is the first time you have heard it.
- If conversation is difficult, make a positive comment about one of their favourite subjects, even if it seems ‘out of the blue’. It won’t appear odd to them.
- Convey cheerfulness. Be positive and reassuring.



At the visit *continued*

- When replying to questions, give only one piece of information and embed it in ‘good news’.
- Accept incorrect statements - they may be caused by memory loss or faulty logic, but do acknowledge the emotions behind the words.
- If they say or do something with which you disagree, please take care not to contradict them in word, facial expression or deed.
- If they are convinced X is still alive perhaps ask them to tell you about them or just say they are not here.
- Do everything possible to make them feel valued and important to you.

Leaving:

- Other than with those in a relatively early stage, avoid making excuses to leave, or formally saying goodbye. When everything is going well, and before either of you tire, possibly murmur about needing to go to the toilet or to the car and wander out of the room. If you do this; you avoid the reality of saying goodbye, which can result in sad feelings. Departure should not be a ‘big deal’.

“Parachute in, evaporate out” (Sunrise suggests)