

AGENCY FOR INTEGRATED CARE

Community Mental Health Division



Namaste Care Toolkit

(Abridged and adapted from Namaste Care by Joyce Simard)

For Caregivers

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About Dementia

Dementia is a progressive and degenerative disease, and there are several stages for the progression of dementia. The experience is different for each person. Memory problems are early signs of dementia. The changes are gradual and in later stages, daily activities may become increasingly challenging without assistance. For some, speech is affected and they may find it more difficult to communicate their needs or engage in meaningful conversations with those around them. Hence, it is important for caregivers to learn how to better understand your loved ones' needs through active listening and reading body language. Caregivers can also show your love and concern through different approaches such as touch, reading or engaging them in activities they enjoy.

About this Toolkit

This Toolkit provides practical tips on how to communicate with your loved ones, create a more conducive environment for daily activities of living and simply enjoying each other's company. While this Toolkit focuses on caregivers caring for persons with dementia, this will also benefit caregivers supporting loved ones without dementia eg. those who are frail, with chronic medical conditions, stroke, end of life etc.

This Toolkit is abridged and adapted from Namaste Care by Joyce Simard in the USA. It adopts a Person-Centered Care (PCC) approach, integrating holistic care including physical, psychosocial needs tailored based on individual's preferences. For more information, visit www.namastecare.com .

This Care Package consists of 4 components which make full use of multi-sensory stimulation:

Create a Safe and Comfortable Space

Choose meaningful activities

Involve caregivers, family and friends

Choose essential equipment and supplies

Create a Safe and Comfortable Space

The room or space should be comfortable, welcoming and homely.

Ideally, there should be a designated room where everything can be left in place and there is no danger to your loved one. If there is no designated room, a space can be created. It may be a screened-off area in your living or dining room. The space or room is a sensory environment for your loved one, and provides a multi-sensory experience every time your loved one steps into it. There are four components to this space:

I. Lighting

Choose a room or space that is quiet with sufficient natural light and ventilation. Strong light can be glaring and uncomfortable. Use soft lights so that

shadows can be reduced. If possible, choose a colour your loved one likes for the walls, curtains, screens, etc.

2.Music

You may introduce your loved one into the space by playing upbeat music. To soothe and relax them, play light music. Understand what kind of music your loved one likes and dislikes, meeting your loved one's needs wherever possible. Music can trigger memories, improve mood and facilitate engagement.

3.Scent

Scent the room or space with essential oils of lavender and lemonbalm, which have been shown to reduce anxiety and agitation for persons with dementia.

4.Suitable furniture

Provide a comfortable chair for your loved one to recline, and a light blanket for a cosy feel.

Choose Meaningful Activities

Capture your loved one's interest and attention using multi-sensory activities.

For loved ones where verbal communication may be difficult, meaningfully-chosen activities can enable your loved one to experience non-verbal communication and stimulation. When introducing an activity, take time to explain and demonstrate to your loved one what the activity is about, as this is more likely to result in a positive response. It is important to determine the suitable activity based on their functions and preferences. These are some examples of activities for your loved one:

I. Welcome Your Loved One into the Room or Space

The multi-sensory activity can commence when your loved one moves into the room or space. For example, holding your loved one's hands and assisting your loved one to sit comfortably on the chair will allow your loved one to feel welcomed. While holding hands, draw out responses from your loved one by asking, "Did you sleep well?"

Watch for changes in expression and start by performing a light massage on the hands. Touch is a fundamental means of communication and a loving touch demonstrated through a light massage can calm your loved one down.

2.Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)

ADLs can take on a meaningful experience within this room or space too. For example, your loved one may usually resist having his or her nails clipped. However, in this safe and comfortable space (Section 2), your loved one is calm and more likely to co-operate, and may enjoy the experience. You may also include elements of reminiscence when doing the ADL such as use of their favourite shampoo/soap due to their familiar scent or playing old songs to liven up the atmosphere.

3.Prepare Appropriate Food and Drinks

Prepare food and drinks that your loved one likes. Food and drink will stimulate your loved one's sense of sight, smell and taste. Serving it in between activities will add to the multi-sensory experience. Use this safe and comfortable space as an opportunity for your loved one to drink sips of water, thereby ensuring hydration.

4.The Power of a Loving Touch

Touch is a fundamental means of human communication and humans need touch as a part of our lifelong need to be cared for, nurtured, valued and loved. However, when caregivers are busy with caregiving tasks, one may neglect your loved ones' need for touch and other displays of love.

Touch is known to be the most powerful stimulus in engaging someone with advanced dementia. Touch may involve just holding your loved one's hand, offering a hand rub or massage. Even gently brushing your loved one's hair can be a pleasurable and meaningful experience.

Involve Caregivers, Family and Friends

Having different people engage your loved one adds variety to their social interaction.

Involve your loved one's family and friends in these activities that can improve your loved one's quality of life. Having different people engage your loved one adds variety to their social interaction even though verbal communication may sometimes be challenging for them.

The accompanying caregiver, family and friend should make eye contact with your loved one, and speak appreciatively and in an affirming way – thanking your loved one for the pleasure of their company, praising bright eyes, fine skin or a lovely smile.

Your loved one's family and friends can take turns to conduct meaningful activities, and meet regularly to discuss the progress and improvements to meet the evolving needs of your loved one.

Essential Equipment and Supplies

Personalize the individualized supplies according to your loved one's needs.

Personalise the session with supplies that will facilitate meaningful activities for your loved one. For example, using hand moisturiser when offering your loved one a light hand rub or massage enhances your loved one's multi-sensory experience. Using traditional creams will evoke your loved one's memories as well. These are some other suggestions:

Supplies	Purpose
Face cloth	To wipe and clean the face of the senior
Aqueous cream for moisturizing skin	To moisturize the skin of the senior
Cotton buds	To clean areas of the senior's face
Hypoallergenic oil for massage	To massage and rub seniors hands
Soap dispenser/hand sanitizer	To wash and clean the relevant areas of the senior
Hairbrush and comb	To keep the seniors suitably kempt
Nail clippers	To trim the nails of the seniors
Face cream e.g. Nivea	(For female) to keep the senior's face fresh and moisturized <i>Note: Traditionally used cream will evoke memories for seniors</i>
Lip balm	To keep the senior's lips moisturized
Shaver and shaving cream	(For male) to keep the senior's face kempt and shaven