

COMMUNICATION TIPS FOR THE ELDERLY

The normal aging process can affect a person's communicative abilities. Some changes include: sensory loss (sight/hearing), memory decline, slower processing of information, reduction of power and influence over their own lives, retirement from work, and separation from family and friends. Effective communication leads to higher quality of life for elderly people and can also aid in decreasing agitation and depression. Highlighted here are the different types of communication that you, and the residents you work with, may use or may want to try out, as well as some tips for putting them into action.

COMMUNICATION TIPS

Sit face to face: Elderly residents may have vision or hearing loss, sitting face to face helps to eliminate visual distractions while allowing them to clearly see your facial expressions and gestures. Maintain eye contact throughout the conversation to maximise attention and engagement with the resident.

Create a communication friendly environment: A distraction free, quiet environment can help the person attend and focus, and allows for clear and effective communication. This may involve: turning off the TV or radio, putting phones on silent, closing the door or window and turning the light on. Always ensure the resident is comfortable, for example, help them into a comfortable seating position or give them an extra blanket if they feel cold.

Clear communication: Ensure you are using an appropriate speaking volume and slow down your rate of speech. Stick to one topic at a time and allow the person plenty of time to listen to you, **process** the information and **respond** to it. You may need to repeat something more than once and it's important not to feel frustrated when doing so, as your frustration may be detected by the person who you are with, and may deter them from engaging with you.

RECEPTIVE VS. EXPRESSIVE COMMUNICATION

Receptive language is the ability to recognize and understand information created by words, language and gestures. It involves interpreting meaning from communication partners, our environment and experiences. For example, receptive language is when someone waves to you and you understand they are saying hello, or when someone speaks to you and you can understand what they have said and respond appropriately. Good listening, attention and concentration skills are vital components of receptive communication.



RECEPTIVE VS. EXPRESSIVE COMMUNICATION

Expressive language is the ability to use words, sentences, writing or gestures to create and convey a message to others. Expressive language is our method of expressing our thoughts for others to receive and this can be conveyed through verbal or non-verbal communication. For example, giving someone a thumbs up to indicate you are happy, frowning to indicate you are not happy, or using words, sentences and conversation to express needs, thoughts and engage with others. There are many methods of verbal and non-verbal expressive communication that some people respond to better such as:

EXPRESSIVE LANGUAGE	
<p>VERBAL (use of words)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Producing sounds, words and sentences • Written 	<p>NON-VERBAL (without use of words)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body language • Facial expression • Gestures • Touch • Silence • Proximity



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You can also visit [nutricia.ie](https://www.nutricia.ie), email nutriciacare@nutricia.com or Freephone 1800 923 404 for more information.