



## Four Steps Toward Better Communication with Persons with Dementia

### 1. Start the interaction in a conversational manner.

- ◆ Approach from the front, calmly and slowly
- ◆ Make eye contact
- ◆ Call the person by preferred name
- ◆ State who you are and why you are there
- ◆ Allow time for a response
- ◆ Begin in a conversational manner not task focused

### 2. Simplify what you say

- ◆ Use questions that can be answered “yes” or “no”
- ◆ Use clear, simple, and short sentences
- ◆ Give directions one at a time
- ◆ Provide choices if possible and show options with visual cues
- ◆ Rephrase your sentences

### 3. Check your approach

- ◆ Your verbal message: tone of voice, rate of speech, volume, and words
- ◆ Your non-verbal message: body language, facial expression, use of touch, eye contact
- ◆ Suggest or invite; don't tell them what they need to do
- ◆ Ask permission; use a calm and soothing tone of voice
- ◆ Use positive vs. negative statements

### 4. Be supportive

- ◆ Provide the words the person is looking for
- ◆ **Listen** for their emotional message:
  - ◆ Tone of voice
  - ◆ Body language
  - ◆ Facial expression
- ◆ Validate the emotional message: empathy, sincerity, acceptance, provide reassurance
- ◆ Try non-verbal forms of communication for cuing

*Effective Communication* is key when working with clients/residents who have a dementia