Communication & Dementia: 
A brief Introduction

HOW TO COMMUNICATE WELL WITH PEOPLE LIVING WITH DEMENTIA
Communication is a team effort

- Check the person’s requirements and preferred supports
- Find the right amount of complexity (eg choices, rather than open questions)
- Give time – don’t rush or fill in gaps
- Meet people where they are at. Things keep changing, be flexible
- Don’t quiz or point out errors and repetition – connect and share
- Use a range of options to support your message (e.g matching gestures, pictures)

Ways to make it easier

- Communicate simply and keep messages short – but don’t talk down
- Set a relaxed pace and check when you are not sure
- Breaks are very important
- Organise the day and week so there is time to recover
- Leave time for important communication
- Get the environment right (quiet, well-lit, no competing distractions, comfortable)
- Consider culture and personal history
- Try different modes (writing, pictures, doing things together)
- Communicate with the belief the person has valuable things to impart

When words don’t work

- Expressed emotion is communication – respond to emotion and what’s behind it
- When words get frustrating, try a break – walks, music, activity
- Value nonverbal communication
- Know about and raise valued topics – what is important to the person? What do they like to talk about? Support with environment, pictures and sounds
- Get specialised help

Info and support

- Local dementia organisation & support group
- Speech pathology associations
- Aphasia associations

Watch the 3-part Communication & Dementia videos series

Scan QR code or visit: itee.uq.edu.au/florence-community

Myth: You can’t communicate properly with people living with dementia.

Fact: Communication is a human need. People living with dementia have important things to say & there are ways to maintain good communication.
“I need lots and lots of breaks in between whatever I’m doing. Be it cooking or communicating with people out in the community… **breaks are just essential.**”

**Natalie,** living with dementia

“**I like playing games… Computer games, board games, any kind of games really that I don’t have to communicate terribly much. So somebody sitting and playing a game with me is wonderful for me because I have company, I can concentrate on the game, I haven’t got to concentrate on conversation… and it’s just lovely to be with someone without having constantly think about what they’re talking about.**”

**Bobby,** living with dementia