

Activity

Spend 5 to 10 minutes observing a person with dementia who is in the later stages of dementia. You might decide to do this with a colleague so you can reflect on the experience together afterwards and compare what you both observed. You may have different interpretations of what the person is trying to express.

The person you are observing is likely to be immobile and may have very limited verbal communication. Watch closely for any signs of movement in the person's body or any sounds that they make.

Do you understand what the person might be trying to express? Might it be a sign of pain or discomfort? Or does it seem to be a positive emotion or noise that the person is communicating?

Choose a simple activity to try out with the person. You might want to choose a book or a magazine which relates in some way to the interests of the person, for example a book about railways for a train enthusiast or a recipe book for a keen cook. Alternatively you could choose a poem, a song or a popular children's verse. If you would prefer to do a more practical activity, you could do a hand massage with some hand cream. Give yourself at least 10 minutes of uninterrupted one-to-one time to sit with the person.

Try reading out loud from the book or reciting or singing the song.

If you are giving a hand massage take time to explain what you would like to do and ask permission. Tell the person the name of the hand cream and tell them if it is a little cold.

Watch for signs of response from the person. Stop for a minute or two to see if the person gives some indication they would like you to continue.

Do not give up too quickly. It might take time for the person to appear to notice what you are saying or doing.

Make sure when you finish the activity, you ask the person if they have liked what you were doing.

Even a small gesture of the hand, a facial expression or a noise might give you a sense of whether the person is enjoying the activity.