



TIPS FOR BUSINESSES: ADOPTING A DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

People with dementia may visit your business, service organization, or workplace. At times, they may need extra assistance. Try these simple tips to help make your business a dementia-friendly environment.

Speak clearly and be patient. Speak clearly, calmly, and slowly to allow the person time to understand information. Use simple short sentences and avoid direct questions. Keep choices to a minimum and don't raise your voice. When possible, talk in a quiet, non-distracting place.

Body language. People with dementia may find it difficult to understand what is being said, but may quickly interpret the look on someone's face and be aware of body language. Smile warmly, make eye contact, use a friendly tone, and respect personal space.

Listen. Listen carefully to what the person has to say, giving plenty of encouragement, yet looking for other clues of what they may be trying to communicate. If the person finds it difficult to find a word, suggest one...but be careful not to interrupt or finish their sentence. Don't rush. Try to go at their pace.

Lighting. Make sure the lighting is sufficient so the person can see you and everything around them clearly.

Handling money. Counting money, calculating change, recognizing coins and bills, and knowing the value of money can all be very difficult for someone with dementia. Offer to help by counting out money and providing a receipt.

Finding the way. People with dementia may have forgotten where things are or may not recognize everyday objects. If they are not able to follow simple directions, guide them to where they want to go.

Seeming lost. Sometimes people with dementia may appear lost or forget where they live. If someone is distressed, offer to help by asking if their address is on something in their pocket or bag. When necessary, the police can help.

Recognizing and finding things. People with dementia may have forgotten what they came in to get. They may have a list, but have problems finding the things they want. Offer to help with the list. Help them choose the typical amount of things, particularly if they seem to be buying an unusually large amount of something.

Making choices. While choice is good, for someone with dementia, too much choice can be confusing. Ask what the person would like and then describe two or three likely options. Allow them time to think and make a decision.

Confusing reality. The person may be confused and say something that doesn't make sense to you. Avoid making the person feel embarrassed or foolish by contradicting them. Try to find a way around the situation.

Every day can be different. For some people with dementia, what they can do changes from day to day. How you help them may differ each time they visit. Watch for signs and offer help when needed.

ACT on Alzheimer's®, a statewide, volunteer-driven collaboration preparing Minnesota for the impacts of Alzheimer's, has developed resources that can help businesses prepare for this emerging issue in partnership with other community stakeholders.

Learn more and engage in this work in your community by contacting info@ACTonALZ.org.

