When a person living with dementia is having trouble expressing themselves or understanding what is being communicated, try these tips to help you stay connected:

1. Use what you know about the person
2. Reduce distractions
3. Chat face to face
4. Be flexible
5. Stay positive

Looking for more tips and examples? Visit alzheimer.ca/Communication
What does the person like? Use that knowledge to suggest conversation topics or activities they may enjoy.

- Nurture the person’s skills and abilities. Focus on what they can do instead of what they can’t.
- When the person is making a choice, offer them a couple of options that you know they will like.

Take note of possible visual or auditory distractions in the person’s environment and minimize them.

- Account for any hearing or vision challenges the person may have.
- Make eye contact to help focus the person’s attention.

Avoid talking to the person if you’re behind them or where they can’t see you.

- Speak clearly, using short and simple sentences.
- Show as well as talk. Using actions can help give your words meaning.

A person’s abilities can change from day to day, so take a few moments at the beginning of the conversation to assess how they’re doing.

- Look for changes in behaviour and body language that may tell how the person is feeling, especially if they may indicate discomfort. Adjust to accommodate.
- When the person is unable to communicate verbally, communicate through the senses, like touch.

Be aware of your own tone and body language. Model the mood.

- Connect instead of correct. Ignore mistakes and give encouragement.
- When you feel overwhelmed, take a step back and exhale.

For more information and support, contact your local Alzheimer Society at alzheimer.ca/Find. We are here to help.