

“What Would You Say” Ideas

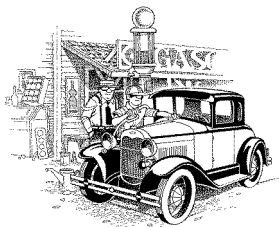
In many of our programs we collect ideas and good advice from participants... here are a number of great responses to tough statements sometimes made by those with dementia.

Person with dementia:

“I need to get to work.”

We might say:

- ♦ “I was wondering what it is that you do for a living?”
- ♦ “It’s your day off today. How about a cup of coffee and the newspaper?”
- ♦ “What was your first job?”
- ♦ “It’s Saturday! You are off the hook!”
- ♦ “It’s a holiday today! But if you would like to do some work, I need your help on this.”
- ♦ “Where do you work?”
- ♦ “I heard that you were a mechanic.”
- ♦ “Your boss called just this morning and wanted to give you the day off.”
- ♦ “What do you like about your job?”
- ♦ “We’re waiting for your ride.” During this time ask for help on a project. (Find similar work in their home, set table, sort silverware, fold towels, laundry, dust, windows, stack wood, sort tools, work with yarn, bouquets, bring in a saddle/objects relating to hobbies...)
- ♦ “Work will always be there! Will you sit with me a little bit?”
- ♦ Create work! Enable the person to **CONTRIBUTE** to daily living.
- ♦ **BUILD AN ACTIVE LIVING ENVIRONMENT.**
- ♦ “You can’t go to work on an empty stomach. Let’s get some breakfast first!”
- ♦ “I bet you are a hard worker. How many years have you been working there?”
- ♦ If in evening: “You’ll need to be there at 8a.m. You’ll need a good night sleep!”



Person with dementia:

“Where’s my car?”

We might say:

- ♦ “Do you like to drive your car?”
- ♦ “What color is your car?”
- ♦ “Where would you like to go?”
- ♦ “What is your favorite car? I like trucks.”
- ♦ “What kind of car do you have? I need to know so I can go look for it.”
- ♦ “It’s out in the parking lot – it’s a little cold, though. Would you sit with me for a while until the weather clears?”
- ♦ “It’s in the shop for an oil change, but it should be ready soon.”
- ♦ “Have you traveled far?”
- ♦ “I talked with your daughter this morning, and she is taking care of your car.”
- ♦ Create access with a car. Go for a ride.
- ♦ “What was the first car you ever owned?”

Person with dementia:

“Where am I supposed to be?”

We might say:

- ♦ “You are supposed to be right here with me!” (give a hug or offer arm)
- ♦ “I’ve been looking all over for you. You are right where you need to be. Would you like to go do something together?”
- ♦ “May I walk with you for a bit?”
- ♦ “We’re supposed to be doing laundry. Would you come fold towels with me?”
- ♦ “Let’s go down here. Don’t tell the nurses where we are going!”
- ♦ “Why don’t we go put on some music and dance!” or direct them to a current activity.
- ♦ “My favorite place is to be anywhere with you. Let’s go get some ice cream.” Take a moment to be together.
- ♦ Mention upcoming events.
- ♦ Orient to the time of day. “Well, it’s afternoon, so we better go get some lunch.”

Person with dementia:

“I want to go home.”

We might say:

- ♦ “Well we need to go pack first.” (head down the hall and begin sharing stories and spending time together)
- ♦ “I believe I heard the doctor say that you will be going home tomorrow.”
- ♦ “I bet you have a beautiful home.”
- ♦ “There’s no place like home, is there?”
- ♦ “Do you think you could stay for dinner?”
- ♦ “The weather is pretty nasty. Would you wait with me a little while until the storm passes?”
- ♦ “Isn’t it interesting how much home means to us?”
- ♦ “I heard a great quote once, ‘I want to feel at home wherever I find myself.’”
- ♦ “Could you stay for lunch? It’s paid for!”
- ♦ “Tell me about your home.”
- ♦ “Do you live here in (*name of city*)?”
- ♦ “Your room has been paid for tonight. Would you like me to show you where it is?”
- ♦ “Could you stay with me tonight?”
- ♦ “I’ll miss you too much if you leave.”
- ♦ Person with dementia asks: “Where are you going?” You know you are heading home but you might say: “I just got here.”
- ♦ “What do you like to do at home?”
- ♦ “What makes home home?”
- ♦ “What place in your home is your favorite?”
- ♦ “I have cooked supper. Do you think you could stay a bit longer?”
- ♦ “The weather is a mess right now! We have snow and ice. How about waiting until tomorrow when it all melts?”
- ♦ “We only have a truck. With two seats, would you like to sit in the bed of the truck?” (BANTER... if this fits the person’s personality)
- ♦ If destination is the bank: “Today is a holiday. They’ll be open tomorrow.”
- ♦ “I caught a ride over here. So, when my ride comes I will ask if we can go together.”

- ♦ “It’s really late right now. We do have an extra hotel room. Would you like to stay a night?”
- ♦ Lead into conversations about owning lots of stuff, garage sales, favorite sentimental objects, etc.
- ♦ Use touch in combination with the above responses. Hold hands, hug, etc.
- ♦ “Let me introduce you to...” HELP THE PERSON CONNECT with others in the environment. Even if he/she has met them before, INTRODUCE.
- ♦ “We have a couple other things to do first. I really need your help with something...”
- ♦ Participate in current activities, look at belongings, talk about special pictures, fold laundry
- ♦ Person with dementia: “YOU GOTTA CALL ME A CAB!” Caregiver: “Fine. You’re a cab!” (Again, BANTER only if this fits the personality)

Family member response to “take me with you”:

- ♦ “I’ll be back tomorrow morning.”
- ♦ Mention what I need to do, “I need to go to the grocery store.” Shopping, bank, etc. “I’m leaving, but you have very special people here with you.” REINFORCE THE FACT PEOPLE ARE HERE
- ♦ “I have to go to the dentist.”
- ♦ “I need to get home to cook dinner for my husband.” Build on their value system
- ♦ SEE THE NEEDS OF THE SITUATION

Person with dementia:

“I haven’t had any lunch.”

We might say:

- ♦ “Let’s walk to the kitchen and find something we’d like to eat.”
- ♦ “When would you like to have lunch?”
- ♦ “Are you hungry? Do you want a snack?”
- ♦ “What do you like to eat?”
- ♦ “What would you prefer to eat at lunch?”
- ♦ “I don’t know that I have had anything either. What sounds good?”

- ♦ “I’m so sorry! I’m running late today and we are supposed to have lunch together.”
- ♦ “Dinner is not too far away. Why don’t we have a sandwich?”
- ♦ **CARDINAL RULE: DON’T ARGUE WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE DEMENTIA**
- ♦ **GIVE ONLY 2 CHOICES.** Too many gets confusing.
- ♦ Diabetic: “We’ll be eating really soon.”
Involve them in a project. (Setting tables, sorting silverware, folding napkins, washing dishes, wiping tables, beautification for dinner guests – let’s get ready for our next meal!)
- ♦ “We’ll be eating pretty soon. Speaking of food, what is your favorite food?”
- ♦ “You sound hungry.” (ACTIVE LISTENING)
- ♦ Hunger for food vs. Hunger for companionship. Often times the person gets food and then doesn’t eat it. Perhaps the person just wants to sit with someone a minute!
- ♦ Have hard candy on stash. Offer a piece if okay.

Person with dementia:

“My husband hasn’t been to see me in weeks!”

We might say:

- ♦ “I found a letter that he left you the other day. Would you like me to read you the note?”
(Have a letter written and stored in a drawer close by. Read the uplifting letter whenever the person needs to feel in touch with that family member.)
- ♦ “Tell me about your husband.”
- ♦ “Aren’t you lucky!” (only if you have a bantering relationship with the person)
- ♦ “What does your husband look like? I don’t know that we have met.”
- ♦ “How many years have you been married?”
(wait for response) I’ve been married for only 10 years! I admire your relationship.”
- ♦ “How did you meet?”
- ♦ “What do you like to do together?”

- ♦ “Maybe he’s busy today. Should we give him a call?”
- ♦ “I bet you miss him a lot.”
- ♦ “What does he do for a living?”
- ♦ “Would you like to write him a letter?”
- ♦ “I bet you really enjoy spending time together.”
- ♦ “He’s out of town. I’m sure he’ll be here as soon as he gets back.”
- ♦ “I miss him too.”
- ♦ “I’m sure you miss him. It’s a nice thing that you miss your husband.”
- ♦ “I remember when…”
- ♦ “He’ll be by later this afternoon.”
- ♦ Shoe box full of cards. Re-read.
- ♦ “He called this morning. He’ll be here this evening.” **GIVE A TIME FRAME.**
- ♦ “He might be working. When I see him, I’ll come find you!”
- ♦ “I haven’t met him. Can you tell me about your husband?”
- ♦ “Is there something special you would like to tell him?”
- ♦ Create a video of the family members. Play the video when he/she is looking for familiar faces.
- ♦ **CREATE MAIL BOXES.** Functional. Use the red tag to show mail! Let the residents get their mail.
- ♦ **GUESTBOOK**...write notes to the person each time you visit (to be read later)

HELPFUL TIP: Allow the person with dementia the opportunity to talk about whatever it is that is on his or her mind. Asking a question is fine, but we need to give the person adequate time to respond. If the person seems to be struggling with a question we have asked, we need to pull the conversation back into our own court. After giving the person with dementia time to release on the issue at hand, perhaps we can tell a story that relates to the subject. Often times the best approach to these tough statements and questions is to simply sit down and **spend a few minutes together.** This is a sign to the person that we care.