



The
**Dementia
Society**
Ottawa and Renfrew County

MOVING IN AND MAKING THE TRANSITION: COMMUNICATING WITH STAFF



After a move to assisted living or long-term care, the person you are caring for must adjust to new people and new routines. You are now a member of their care community. Your involvement is valuable, but you may be wondering: Where do I fit in?

You are now a “partner in care”. Your role is to encourage quality care by working and communicating with the staff.

TIPS FOR GETTING SETTLED:

Familiarize yourself with the home and staff by:

- Reviewing the online and printed information about the home to find out about daily routines, programs, and services. Ask for the activities calendar to be sent to you each month.
- Allowing the staff to get to know you.
- Keeping a communication book in the room so that the staff can share important information.

Help the staff get to know the person by:

- Providing information like the person’s background, past work, and hobbies.
 - Fill out **My Life Story** booklet to share with staff: https://mkodsorcwebsiteunago.kinstacdn.com/wp-content/uploads/My_Life_Story_-_EN.pdf
- Clearly communicating the needs and daily routines of the person. For example: “My husband has had oatmeal with brown sugar for breakfast for years. He takes coffee in the morning, but tea in the afternoon.”
- Writing on the back of photographs. This can help the staff and the person with dementia know who the people are in pictures.

WHEN YOU HAVE A CONCERN

If you have questions or concerns, address them as they come up. It is best not to let them build up over time. Here are some tips for expressing your concerns:

- Ask yourself: Is my reaction reasonable for the situation? Who is the right person to talk to and is now the right time?
- Try to stay focused and on track with your question:
 - Be specific and use facts
 - Deal with one issue at a time
 - Ask the staff for their input
 - Avoid criticizing, arguing, or judging
- Use “I” statements to explain yourself: For example: “I find my husband seems more depressed and withdrawn.”
- Explain how you feel about it: “I am worried about this change because it is out of character for him.”
- Describe what you want to see happen: “I would like to work with you and my husband to find a solution. Can we talk about it?”
- Use open-ended questions: “What kind of activities might I attend with him to help him feel more involved?”
- Give positive feedback and compliment good work when you see it.

Remember to set realistic expectations. The care will not always be perfect, but you can act as an advocate to make sure the person gets the best care possible.

More information and resources:

- On-demand Learning Module – Adjusting to long-term care: <https://dementiahelp.ca/understanding-dementia/on-demand-learning/>
- Ten Tips for Effective Communication with Staff: <https://togetherinthis.com/communicate-effectively-long-term-care-team/>
- Caregiver Checklist for the Middle and Late Stages: <https://dementiahelp.ca/understanding-dementia/resources-factsheets/>
- Retirement Home and Long-term Care Support Group for Caregivers: <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/support-group-long-term-care-and-retirement-home-registration-104479892170>

Ottawa: 613-523-4004 **Renfrew-County:** 1-888-411-2067 | info@dsorc.org | DementiaHelp.ca

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