



# Alzheimer's Services

## of Marshall County

P. O. Box 2842, Albertville, AL 35950

### Compassionate Communication with the Alzheimer's Disease Patient

When interacting with someone who has Alzheimer's disease, it is important to realize that our actions, facial expressions and tone of voice speak louder than our words. Be aware of what your presence communicates. Please don't argue with the patient, question their memory or remind them that they forget. Adjust to their world. They cannot control what is happening to them.

#### Remember:

- They are not crazy or lazy. Their behavior changes are responses to their confusing world. They are saying and doing things that are normal for Alzheimer's patients. Reasoning, pleading or punishing will not change their unwanted behavior. They are trying as hard as they can.
- Their reality is now different than yours and you cannot change them. You cannot control the disease. You can only control your reaction to it.
- Their disability is memory loss. They will ask the same question over and over, believing it is the first time they have asked.
- Do not take "stealing" accusations personally. To them, they do not hide things; they *protect* things by putting them in a safe place.
- They are scared all the time. Patients react differently to fear. Some may become passive, uncooperative, hostile, angry, agitated, verbally abusive, or physically combative. They may do them all at different time or alternate between them. Anxiety may compel them to follow you everywhere.

#### Do not:

- Hurry the patient.
- Offer too many choices to the patient.
- Lose patience when asked the same thing more than once.
- Argue or confront the patient.
- Question them to test their memory.
- Remind them that they forget.
- Take the patient's words or actions personally.

#### Do:

- Speak slowly and simply, being mindful of your expressions and the tone of your voice.
- Give one direction or ask one question at a time. Allow time for comprehension.
- Repeat instructions or sentences *exactly* the same way.
- Agree with them or distract them to a different subject or activity.
- Accept the blame when something's wrong (even if it's fantasy).
- If necessary, leave the room to avoid confrontations.
- Be patient, cheerful and reassuring. Have a sense of humor and go with the flow.
- Be kind and gracious to your loved one at all times.