



# Successful Interaction Tools for People with Dementia from The Senior Gems™

## Cues That Work

**VISUAL:** “What you show them.” Always start with good visual cues. Keep in mind loss of peripheral vision. You need to be in front at eye level.

**VERBAL:** “What you tell them.” After visual, add verbal cues. Make sure the verbal cues match up with visual cues to avoid creating confusion.

**TOUCH:** “How you physically assist them.” Only after visual and verbal cues do you then add touch. If you start with touch, it doesn’t work well. The person often won’t understand what you are trying to do.

## Getting Up & Going

**GIVE SHORT SIMPLE INFO:** Remember not too much. Keep it tight & focused.

**LIMIT THE CHOICES:** Offer specific options. “Do you want the blue or red one?”  
Avoid open questions like “What would you like to do?”

**ASK FOR THEIR HELP:** “Can you help me?” rather than “Let me help you” is a good way to engage them. Gives them a role to feel positive about.

**“GIVE IT A TRY”:** Rather than “Mom, you need to do X,” ask “Why not just give it a try?”

**BREAK IT DOWN:** If it isn’t working, you may be asking too much all at once. Break it down into little steps. “Put your feet under you. Lean forward.”

## Supportive Communication

**GREET BEFORE YOU TREAT:** Focus on name, not relationship. “Hi, it’s Susan.” Your relationship in the past doesn’t matter. They may not remember it. It’s all about today. Can they like you right now? Don’t ever ask if they know who you are. It is distressing and reduces function rather than increase it.

**POSITIVE SOCIAL GREETING:** Ignore any negative aspects of their appearance. Look into their eyes. Be upbeat, friendly, and happy to see them.

**GIVE A COMPLIMENT:** “What a nice color on you.” “My, you look great today.” It is not about what’s going wrong, but keeping focus on what’s going right. This may require practice.

**BRING A VISUAL CUE:** Bring something to drink, eat or a favorite object. Start off on a positive note before asking them to do something.

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