

# **Interaction Strategies**

**Minimizing Agitation and Aggression**

STRATEGIES	DEFINITIONS	EXAMPLES
<p><b>Validation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A technique developed by social worker Naomi Feil for communicating with confused elders.</li> <li>• Involves meeting the person where they are in space and time, and interacting with them there.</li> <li>• “Stepping into their world.”</li> <li>• Respects and accepts the feelings and perceptions of the person who is disoriented <u>without trying to convince them of the real world.</u></li> <li>• Avoids arguing with the person, but also avoids lying or participating in their disorientation.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Resident</u>: “Let me go! I have to go to work. I can’t be late!”</p> <p><u>Staff</u>: “I know – being late isn’t OK. I think you have a little time for a quick breakfast. That will help you work better.”</p> <p><u>Resident</u>: “No – NO! I can’t!!” <i>The resident was sitting outside the shower.</i></p> <p><u>Staff</u>: “That’s a lot of water, isn’t it? What if you sit here, and I’ll wet the cloth in the shower. I’ll wrap you in these towels.”</p>
<p><b>Respect of space</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Violation of personal space is a powerful stimulus for agitation and defensive aggression.</li> <li>• How big personal space is can be determined by culture, by background, by the size and sex of the person entering the space.</li> <li>• It also varies simply from individual to individual.</li> <li>• In American culture personal space is about a leg length.</li> <li>• Ask permission (verbally or nonverbally) to enter someone’s personal space.</li> <li>• Call the person by name.</li> </ul> <p><i>Asking permission and making yourself known decreases the chance of a fight-or-flight reaction.</i></p>	<p><u>Staff</u> (stopping a few feet in front of the resident), “Hi, Mr. Jackson. I like your sweater.” <u>Staff extends hand and Mr. Jackson shakes it. Staff holds onto hand lightly, moves closer, and gently/slowly touches his shoulder. Staff member is in!</u></p> <p><u>Resident</u> in wheelchair is going the wrong way down the hall, away from the dining room. <u>Staff</u> member comes up from behind, then goes around to the front of the resident.</p> <p><u>Staff</u>: “I’d like to help you to the dining room, Mrs. Haines.”</p> <p><u>Resident</u>: “That’s good.”</p> <p><u>Staff</u>: “I’ll just go around and push you from behind. Is that OK?”</p>

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<p><b>Redirection &amp; Distraction</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redirection is turning a person’s attention from one activity to another.</li> <li>• Distraction is turning attention from one object or idea to another, more desirable one.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Resident</u> (pacing and mumbling louder and louder)  <u>Staff</u>: “Mr. Lee, could you hold this for me while we walk? Thanks very much.”  <i>(Staff member hands Mr. Lee a small slinky, which he examines.)</i></p>
<p><b>Task breakdown</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being expected to perform a task that is too complicated is a major cause of aggressive behavior.</li> <li>• This strategy breaks a complex task into small steps of one action.</li> <li>• The resident is coached (cued or prompted) to perform one step, then another.</li> </ul>	<p><i>Resident is at the dining table. She pays no attention to her spoon or food.</i>  <u>Staff</u>: “Hi, Mrs. Lee. It’s lunch time. This is your sandwich. <i>(points, no response)</i> <i>Staff places her hand on a quarter of the sandwich.</i>  <u>Staff</u>: “Pick it up.” <i>(guides resident’s hand)</i> “Open your mouth...”</p>

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<b>Guided choices</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making decisions is one way adults exercise their independence and free choice.</li> <li>• Not being able to have this freedom can result in frustration and agitation.</li> <li>• A guided choice is an offer to a person to choose from two equally appropriate options.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Staff</u>: "Mrs. Jones, would you like to use this lotion or this one?"</p>
<b>Active listening</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active listening brings the full attention of the staff member into an interaction with a resident.</li> <li>• Posture, body positioning, and facial expressions indicate involvement in the interaction.</li> <li>• Phrases or key words from the resident's conversation can be repeated in the staff member's response.</li> <li>• In order to listen fully, the staff member should stop what they are doing and position themselves at eye level.</li> <li>• Phrases that indicate involvement are used.</li> <li>• This technique can also be used with people who are confused and have language deficits.</li> <li>• Feelings of security and belonging are reinforced with use of this technique.</li> </ul>	<p>Examples of listening phrases include: I see; tell me more; yes, yes; um-hmm; I know.</p> <p><u>Resident</u>: Looking into a drawer, saying: "It's just not here. I think that woman took it."</p> <p><u>Staff</u>: "I see. Tell me about what is missing." (<i>moving to stand by her side, concerned expression on face</i>)</p> <p><u>Resident</u>: "That necklace I like..."</p> <p><u>Staff</u>: "Um-hmm. I know you liked that necklace."</p>

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<p><b>Prompting &amp; cueing</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A prompt is a verbal direction or reminder, usually of the next small step to be taken in a task.</li> <li>• A cue is a physical guiding provided by the caregiver. It is nonverbal communication.</li> <li>• Cues can vary in the amount of guidance they give. Caregivers should provide only the amount of help needed, then fade it away as the person takes on more of the task.</li> <li>• A cue can be as simple as pointing. A touch on the hand is more of a signal. Guiding the arm from the elbow is more, and hand-over-hand performance of a task is even more.</li> <li>• This technique allows the resident to do as much for themselves as possible. Proper use of cues decreases frustration.</li> </ul>	<p><u>Mr. Thomas</u> has pieces of scrambled egg on his plate. He doesn't focus on them.</p> <p>The <u>staff member</u> gently pushes his hand toward the egg by guiding his arm behind the elbow.</p> <p><u>Mr. Thomas'</u> hand is limp.</p> <p><u>Staff</u> puts her hand over his, tucks some egg under his fingers, and guides his hand to his mouth.</p> <p>She lets go when he opens his mouth and begins to chew.</p>
<p><b>Nonverbal communication</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is some of the most powerful communication known to humans.</li> <li>• Nonverbal communication can convey messages when the use of words breaks down.</li> <li>• Paraverbals are the signals that surround words: tone, volume, rhythm, speed.</li> <li>• Nonverbals include: posture, use of personal space, body movements and gestures, facial expressions.</li> <li>• Touch is one of the most expressive forms of nonverbal communication.</li> </ul>	<p>Paul is 28 – moderately retarded.</p> <p>He does not like his job at lunchtime – cleaning off the table.</p> <p>"NO! NOT" he yells. His feet are apart. He leans toward the caregiver's face. He is frowning and clenching his fist.</p> <p>What message(s) is he sending?</p> <p>The caregiver takes a step to the side while extending her arms a little, palms up.</p> <p>She says, quietly: "Paul. Paul, I know."</p> <p><i>What message is she sending?</i></p>

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<b>Non-threatening approach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This technique decreases the likelihood of triggering a fight-or-flight reaction.</li><li>• It protects both the resident and the caregiver.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approach the resident from the front.</li><li>• Stay outside the person's space until invited in (handshake, smile)</li><li>• Get on eye level with the person. Make sure that your facial expression and posture convey the message you desire.</li><li>• Ask permission to do what you want to do.</li><li>• Explain with words and/or gestures what you will do.</li><li>• Do not make sudden movements out of the resident's range of vision.</li></ul>