

Guidelines for Care Facility Visitation

- As a volunteer, be mindful that you are a visitor in the home of private citizens and you are there by their leave.
- Before giving any edibles, be informed of any health conditions that may restrict a resident's diet.
- Allow residents to be sad or upset. Validate their feelings in respect for them as persons. To cheer them, redirect their thoughts on the same subject rather than trying to change the subject.
- Do not presume to know a resident's state of mind; nor confront residents with questions about dementia. If necessary, ask the professional care-giver on staff about a specific resident's lucidness. Personally get to know a resident's level of awareness through a relationship based on your patience and understanding.
- Some residents will not remember being told previously about significant events or facts. Their reaction to "old" information will often be as though they are hearing it for the first time. For example, grief over the news that a loved one has passed away may be equally intense each time it is mentioned. Therefore, in such cases, do not lie to them but focus on helping them deal with their FEELINGS AT THE PRESENT TIME rather than being sure they have all the information exactly right. This is called Validation Therapy.
- Speak to each resident by name, making a point to know how each resident wants to be addressed (i.e., Mr. / Mrs. / Dr. / Rev. / etc.).
- Do not presume that a resident knows your name. They will often remember your face but they want to talk to you by name. Mention your name early in the conversation.
- Touch is an important communicator of genuine concern, personal affirmation and sincere affection.
- Due to immobility, poor hearing and reduced peripheral vision, elderly residents have difficulty changing their direction of focus when someone approaches on the side or from the back. Therefore, draw near to them from the front and speak to them face to face.
- When speaking to a resident, pronounce your words distinctly and with a clear voice. Use no greater volume than is necessary for them to understand you plainly. Do not use baby-talk in your conversation.
- Ask open-ended questions to encourage conversation.
- LISTEN!!! No matter what your role in the facility, be quick to listen to the resident. Give them as much control of the conversation or activity as possible.
- Before moving people in a wheelchair, always ask permission while standing in their view, and tell them where they are going. In this way, being polite and considerate, you may also prevent a hand or foot injury.
- Most residents who attend Christian functions consider themselves Christians, and many are stronger in their faith in Jesus than you are. Be careful not to "talk down" to them.
- Avoid making a commitment unless you are sure you will be able to keep it. Good intentions count a little but they're not good enough when a resident is devastated with disappointment!
- And remember, older persons are just like you, only, sometimes, a little more so!