

Behavior Is Communication

Persons with intellectual disabilities may not have the ability to communicate verbally. However, individuals can communicate by relying on other forms of communication, such as facial expressions, gestures, body language, and negative behaviors. These behaviors are often expressions of fear, frustration, pain, or just an inability to make unmet needs known. In order to prevent or minimize negative behaviors, we must learn to communicate with the individual with an intellectual disability.

Remember, both your attitude and your body language communicate your feelings and thoughts *stronger* than your words.

Here are some additional tips:

- ❖ **Before speaking, make sure you have the person's attention.**
 - Minimize distractions.
 - Address the person by name.
 - Use nonverbal cues and touch.
 - Get down to the person's eye level and maintain eye contact.

- ❖ **State your message clearly.** Use simple words and sentences. Speak slowly.

- ❖ **Listen with your ears, eyes, and heart.**
Always strive to listen for the meaning and feelings that underlie the words.

- ❖ **Validate the person's feelings.**

- ❖ **Engage the person in valued activities.**

- ❖ **Anticipate and meet the person's needs.**

- ❖ **Tap into the person's long-term memory.**
This is the strongest type of memory for the person with dementia.