

Tips to Create a Communication-Friendly Room

- Make sure there is adequate lighting.
- Reduce background noise (e.g., turn off the TV or radio, close the door).
- Minimize visually distracting items.
- Encourage short visits, with one or two people at a time.

Tips to Help With Comprehension

- Make sure your loved one is wearing their glasses and hearing aids and ensure they are in proper working order. Ask the health-care team to fix a faulty hearing aid.
- Sit facing your loved one at eye level, so they can see your facial expressions and read your lips.
- Speak slowly and clearly, but do not shout. Shouting can distort speech.
- Use short, simple sentences.
- If the person doesn't appear to understand, try saying the same thing in a simpler way.
- Write down what you are saying or use pictures.
- Try using a personal sound amplification device, like a pocket talker. Your health-care team may have one you can borrow.

Tips to Help With Expression

- Capitalize on times of alertness, but allow the person to rest.
- If it is difficult to understand their message, ask them to write, draw, point or gesture.
- Ask 'yes or no' questions or choice questions. For example: "Are you having pain in your arm?" instead of "How are you feeling today?"
- If you aren't sure, ask the opposite question for confirmation. For example: ask "Are you hot?" and then ask "Are you cold?"
- Make sure the call bell is accessible.
- If the person has a weak voice, but fairly clear speech, try using a personal voice amplifier. The health-care team may have one you can borrow.

When Your Loved One Can No Longer Speak

- Help your loved one to find another way to respond, like wiggling toes or fingers to indicate 'yes'.
- Watch for other ways the person might be communicating:
 - Facial expressions or gestures
 - Grimacing, striking out and moaning
 - Body position and tension
- Try asking them to write or use books or boards with letters, words, symbols or pictures.
- Some people may be able to use electronic devices, such as tablets or mobile phones.

When Your Loved One is No Longer Responding to You

Continue to reassure and talk to your loved one in a soothing voice. Remember there are lots of other ways for you to communicate. Such as:

- Touching or holding hands
- Sitting in silence and sharing time
- Praying together
- Reading a book out loud
- Looking through family photos and familiar items
- Providing comfort care, such as moistening their mouth or a gentle massage