

Communication and Activities with Patients
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GOAL – Bring joy and happiness.

I. Do Your Research.

To determine what would bring joy and happiness to the hospice patient I volunteered to visit, I talk with family and facility staff prior to visiting patient and from time to time along the journey. Talk with patient when I see them the first time and along the journey. The patient changes throughout the journey so that what the patient needs/wants will change too.

- a. Find out about the patient from your three sources: education, work, hobbies, games, travels, aptitudes, interests, capabilities, desires.
- b. Find out what family, facility staff, and patient wish, hope, and desire me to do for patient/family.
- c. Patient's favorite reading materials, music, topics of discussion.
- d. Patient's likes and dislikes.
- e. Where was patient born/grew up. Learn about family.
- f. Religious? Denomination?
- g. Understand patient's physical, mental, and cognitive limitations and restrictions.

II. Plan Your Visits.

Everyone is unique. Patients can be in a different mood, etc. from visit to visit and change over time. What works one visit may not work the next visit. You need to modify what you say and do to meet the patient where they are at the moment. Sometimes you get it right and sometimes you don't. Just keep trying! I try to stimulate as many senses as possible. REMEMBER THAT THE SENSE OF SMELL IS THE FIRST TO GO IN THOSE WITH DEMENTIA/ALZHEIMERS.

III. Communication

- a. Spaghetti brain vs box brain – His Brain, Her Brain by
- b. Join the patient in his/her world – their world is always the real one; never, ever dispute what they feel/think (e.g., Annie's fairy story)
- c. Facial expressions.

- d. Charades/ pantomime.
- e. Alphabet on a tablet/paper.
- f. Picture board.
- g. Drawings (even stick figures).
- h. Hearing devices.
- i. Clean and put on their glasses.
- j. Show them options of choices.
- h. Point to things.
- g. Simple words rather than phrases or sentences.

IV. Activities (make sure the patient wins!)

Modify activity so that the patient can do it or at least participate! Use assistive devices as indicated. Assist patient as needed.

- a. Cards with card holder
- b. Dominos
- c. Cribbage
- d. Play instruments on keyboards.
- e. Built up devices on pens/pencils/magic markers.
- f. Coloring books that you do together or separately.
- g. Tell jokes.
- h. Tell about amazing facts.
- g. Tour the world via pictures in books.
- h. Play music and sing, tap to the beat, or wheelchair dance.
- i. Make Christmas ornaments.
- j. Assist patient in writing a card/letter to each family member that the patient at least signs in some manner.
- k. Pet therapy.
- l. If they ask about your life, have a conundrum for which you need advice. Request their advice. They love giving advice and feeling useful.
- m. Honor them on special days (Veteran's Day, holidays, etc...).

V. I can't do anything. I am a burden to my family/society. Why am I still here?

- a. There is a reason you are still here. GOD has a purpose for you. You need to figure out what it is. After you have fulfilled your purpose, GOD will take you.
- b. "What??? I need 9 hugs a day. You are here to give me a hug. I need your hug to survive.