

7 Best Compliance Practices for Dementia Residents During COVID-19

1. Know Your Goal: The goal is safety, not understanding. Residents may not be able to understand it is an emergency. It is not our job to convince them or have them remember.

2. Soft Approach: They will match your energy. If you approach softly and friendly, even in a crisis, you will have more compliance from the resident.

Tone: How you say it is more important than what you say. Smile, make eye contact, and watch body language.

Pace: Slow and calm. Give extra time. Do not rush.

Words: Avoid the words no and don't. Use please, thank you, and apologize, often.

3. Yes, and . . . Do not argue, scold, or disagree with the person with dementia. If they say they are leaving to pick up their kids, tell them, "Yes, and they are going to meet us in your room." If you find you are able to use reality approach with your resident, you still want to frame it with a "yes." For example, we don't "have to stay in our rooms," we "get to have breakfast in bed!"

4. Diversion and Redirection: Change their focus to something safe and enjoyable. Moving their location may be necessary. You will need to do this often, and again, with a soft approach.

5. Engage: Keep them connected. Residents whose social needs are met are less likely to seek out social interaction in inappropriate ways. This may mean staff providing meaningful room visits, having them come out of their room alone for short times and observe from a distance so you can provide verbal cues and encouragement. Increase your verbal and visual interactions, say hello every single time you pass them.

6. Flagman: If you cannot change the person's action, then act as a flagman. Instead of moving them, move others away from them. Walk a few steps ahead to make their destination safe, remove objects and wipe down surfaces they might be touching.

7. Reassurance: Listen to what they are saying. Do not say, "Don't worry about it." Talk about how they are feeling and repeat it back to them. "You sound frustrated."

Not all approaches will work with all residents all the time. If you are not successful, give them space and re-approach with a new technique.

Be flexible and focus on the goal.

Most important, know you are doing important work and even if the resident cannot say thank you, we are grateful for you.