**How Do I Talk to My Loved One With Dementia After Being Isolated for COVID?**

**Be Aware**

Depending on where your loved one is in the disease process, he/she may understand some things but not others. Some things you may notice are:

- Difficulty finding the right words
- Using familiar words repeatedly
- Describing familiar objects rather than calling them by name
- Easily losing a train of thought
- Difficulty organizing words logically
- Reverting to speaking a native language
- Speaking less often
- Relying on gestures more than speaking

This may be even more pronounced after the changes and isolation required for COVID. Do not be surprised if your loved one seems to have declined a bit. This is to be expected and is part of the disease process.

**Be Patient**

Dementia damages a person’s memory, both short and long-term. With the safety restrictions it may have been months since your loved one has seen or talked to you. Be aware that there may be some changes. Here are some tips for coping and communicating.

1. Smile. Body language says more than words, every time.
2. Introduce yourself. Again, remember, it may have been months since they’ve heard the word “Mom” or “Dad” in the context referring to them. It may take them several minutes to connect. Try this: “Hi Mom, it’s Lindsey, your daughter.”
3. Listen. Speech may come slowly and with difficulty. Be patient and give the words time to form. Understand if they don’t make sense.
4. Speak slowly and clearly. Ask one question at a time.
5. Maintain eye contact.
6. Ask Yes or No questions.
7. Understand that it’s okay... it’s been a rough journey for everyone. Give yourself and them a break. It’s hard to communicate after a long absence.

   It’s okay... if YOU don’t know what to say.
   It’s okay... if THEY don’t know what to say, or how to say it.
   It’s okay... if you cry. Emotions and body language speak louder and in a different manner than words. They can understand smiles; they can understand you being relaxed; they can understand a soft voice.

For more information, go to [www.alz.org](http://www.alz.org) or visit the Alzheimer’s COVID Help Line at 800.272.3900.