

# Cognitive Impairment Intervention Protocol (CIIP) for Caregiver Interactions with a Person with Cognitive Impairment: V. OBSERVATION

**Look for ways to notice and recognize:**

- How this person is feeling
- How well this person is understanding
- What this person is trying to express
- Evidence this person is going to be frustrated, anxious, or angry
- Evidence this person may engage in a distressing behavior
- How to best respond to this person's feelings and behaviors

**A. Do I watch this person carefully for nonverbal and verbal feedback, so I can note how this person is feeling, and anticipate or respond to frustration and anxiety?**

1. Remind yourself that since your goal is to help this person feel comfortable and content, her/his feelings are more important than the task you are performing (e.g., when bathing, it is more important for this person to feel good than to be clean. If she/he needs to be clean, then find a way to help her/him be clean and still feel good).
2. Focus more on this person and her/his feelings than on the task.
3. Face and watch this person at all times, even when performing tasks, such as speaking on a phone, rinsing out a washcloth, or talking to someone else.
4. Listen to the words this person is using and to the volume and tone of voice to better understand her/his feelings.
5. Listen to any changes in the tone and volume of this person's voice (whether or not words are used) that might indicate emotions, pain, or change in her/his level of understanding.
6. Watch for subtle changes in this person's body or vocalizations, and respond immediately to the beginning signs of possible frustration or anxiety.

**B. Do I watch this person's whole body for changes, such as tightening leg muscles, clenching fists, widening eyes, rapid eye movements, or brief frowns that suggest confusion, anxiety, or something else she/he is feeling?**

1. Remind yourself that this person's body is always expressing emotions, level of pain, and the ability to understand what is being said or occurring, regardless of her/his level of functioning, even when she/he is nonverbal or lying still.
2. Note any changes or movement in this person's body during a conversation, activity or event. Such changes and movements can indicate a shift in emotions, pain, or possible confusion.
3. Pay particular attention to this person's face and eyes, which may be the most communicative part of her/his body.
4. Avoid focusing only on the face or eyes: watch her/his hands and entire body.
5. Touch this person's body to feel when subtle tightening and relaxing occurs.

### **C. Do I watch this person's eyes when we talk?**

1. Remind yourself that this person's eyes may be the most communicative part of her/his body.
2. Watch for changes in this person's eyes, such as widening eyes, rapid eye movements, blinking, closing eyes, glancing off to one side or down or up, wincing, narrowing of eyes, sudden focusing on you or another person or an object, or a brief frown between the eyes, that might indicate emotions, pain, or change in her/his level of understanding.

### **D. Does this person seem comfortable and relaxed?**

1. Focus more on this person and her/his feelings than on the task.
2. Remind yourself that since your goal is to help this person feel comfortable and content, her/his feelings are more important than the task you are performing (e.g., when bathing, it is more important for this person to feel good than to be clean. If she/he needs to be clean, then find a way to help her/him be clean and still feel good).
3. Watch for smiles and a relaxed face and body (i.e., all parts of the body are relaxed) showing contentment and comfort.

### **E. Is this person responding positively to what I am saying or doing?**

1. Listen and watch for this person's responses to what you are saying or doing.
2. Remind yourself that understanding this person's responses to what you are saying or doing are crucial to figuring out how to help her/him feel comfortable.
3. Face and watch this person at all times, even when performing tasks, such as speaking on a phone, rinsing out a washcloth, or talking to someone else.
4. Remind yourself that this person's positive response is more important than successful completion of a task.

### **F. Does this person seem to understand me?**

1. Remind yourself that communication with this person is successful only if she/he understands you.
2. Remember to watch her/him to make sure she/he understood you before going on to your next comment.

**G. Do I give this person enough time to absorb what I say and to then respond?**

1. Pause often and long enough to allow this person to absorb and respond to what you do and say.
2. Pause often and long enough to allow you time to observe whether this person understood you and is feeling comfortable.
3. Pause between sentences, concepts, and tasks.
4. Keep your pauses only as long as necessary, so you don't disrupt the natural flow or rhythm of the task or conversation.

**H. Do I change my own behavior or the environment in response to this person's reactions?**

1. Respond immediately when you see or hear evidence of emotion (positive or negative), pain, or a change in level of understanding.
2. Nip this person's confusion, frustration, or distress in the bud, before it increases.
3. Change your behavior or what you are saying by, for example, stopping, slowing down, reassuring, repeating yourself, using different words, or shifting to a new position, topic, or task.
4. Change the environment by, for example, removing that which is distressing, or adding positive alternatives such as tea and cookies.