

Cognitive Impairment Intervention Protocol (CIIP) for Caregiver Interactions with a Person with Cognitive Impairment: I. RESPECT

Look for ways to:

- Show respect for this person, both verbally and nonverbally
- Treat this person as an adult, both verbally and nonverbally
- Express love and affection for this person, both verbally and nonverbally

A. Do I respect this person?

1. Think of this person as an adult worthy of your respect.
2. Remember, you are with this person to meet her/his needs. She/he has a right to make as many decisions/choices as possible.
3. Imagine this person as your parent or grandparent or someone else you love, admire, and respect.
4. Get to know her/his culture, preferences, habits, history, and accomplishments.
5. Recognize her/his current physical and medical status and possible pain concerns.
6. Don't take her/his comments or actions personally.
7. Forgive this person.
8. Imagine this person with dignity, regardless of how she/he looks or acts.
9. Address her/his feelings with respect and kindness even when acting to stop a behavior.
10. Arrange for someone else to assist this person until you do respect her/him.

B. Do I treat this person as an adult in my words and facial expressions (for example do I avoid calling this person "dear" when I don't really know her/him)?

1. Avoid thinking of "dependency" as "childlike". Understand that brain changes do not make this person childlike but simply present very specific cognitive challenges. She/he still retains much of the information and skills acquired over a lifetime.
2. Use this person's name frequently, and use the name she/he prefers (e.g., first name and/or Mr./Mrs./Ms.).
3. Express affection in adult terms appropriate for her/his culture and preference (e.g., sir/ma'am).
4. Use eye contact as appropriate for her/his culture and preference.
5. Keep a pleasant, reassuring and kind facial expression. Avoid frowns, tightened lips, clenched teeth, and facial expressions of irritation, disgust, or scolding.

C. Do I offer normal adult objects and activities and avoid children's toys or games?

1. Avoid thinking of "simplifying" as "making childlike".
2. Try to make an adult activity simpler rather than offering children's activities.
3. Play simplified versions of adult games (e.g., bridge) rather than children's games (e.g., "go fish").
4. Encourage adult activities (e.g., using colored pencils or markers to color adult drawings, rather than crayolas to color in children's coloring books).
5. Use actual objects rather than toy facsimiles (e.g., a real screw driver or a normal deck of playing cards).

D. Do I avoid talking about this person in a condescending way, such as "they are so cute together," or "she's the little lady over there"?

1. Imagine this person with dignity, regardless of how she/he looks or acts.
2. Remember this person has adult feelings and thoughts.
3. Speak about this person as you would want people to speak about you or about someone you admire, love and respect.
4. Remember this person's dependency does not give you permission to feel superior.

E. Do I avoid talking about this person in front of her/him?

1. Use private spaces to discuss this person with others.
2. Assume this person hears and understands everything you are saying to others. Even with severe brain impairment, people can sometimes understand what is being said.
3. Include this person in conversations about her/him as much as possible.
4. Avoid embarrassing this person when talking about her/his condition, behaviors, or bodily functions, etc.

F. Are my voice, gestures, and movements gentle and kind, even when clear and firm?

1. Listen to yourself talk. Imagine how you sound to this person. Concentrate on keeping your voice calm, smooth, and gentle, even when joking or being silly.
2. Avoid moving quickly. When rapid movement is necessary, concentrate on keeping the movement gentle.
3. All touch conveys feelings. Keep touch kind and reassuring, even when the situation is extreme and requires physically putting yourself between this person and another person or object to prevent someone from getting hurt.

G. Do I help this person save face and avoid embarrassment? For example, do I avoid calling attention to her/his mistakes and discreetly correct mistakes without her/him noticing?

1. Imagine yourself or someone you admire, love and respect in this situation.
2. Think of ways you can help this person feel good about her/himself and this situation.
3. Try to prevent this person from noticing her/his mistakes, so her/his energy is preserved for conducting the task or interaction.
4. Avoid requiring her/his brain to do unnecessary work (such as correcting mistakes and addressing feelings at the same time).
5. Note this person's mistakes in behavior and words, and correct them without this person or others noticing the corrections.

H. Do I avoid scolding, shaming, or bossing this person?

1. Especially in challenging situations, avoid the temptation to "make this person behave", which may make the situation more difficult to resolve.
2. Understand her/his reduced ability to control her/his behaviors and words. Understand her/his feelings of anxiety, confusion, and anger.
3. Keep your voice, facial expressions, and body movements calm, gentle, kind, and reassuring.
4. Address the feelings of distress, not the behaviors or words. You are there to help this person feel better, not simply to protect her/him and other people in the situation.
5. Avoid taking this person's behaviors and words personally. Seek appropriate ways to express your own frustration, hurt, and anger.