



Dementia and Noisy Environments - A Practical Family Checklist

Sometimes the easiest way to help someone with dementia follow a conversation is to **reduce what their brain has to process.**

Use this checklist before and during busy social situations. Also share it with family and friends before gatherings to help remove the stress on you as the carer and your loved one.

BEFORE YOU GO

- ☐ **Think about the environment** Will there be lots of people, background music, television, traffic or several conversations happening at once?
- ☐ **Choose a quieter time if you can** A café may be much easier to manage when it isn't busy
- ☐ **Consider a smaller gathering** One or two people may be much easier to follow than a large group.
- ☐ **Tell the people coming what will help** Ask family and friends to speak one at a time and avoid talking over each other.
- ☐ **Don't make the day too long** A person may cope well for an hour but become exhausted after several hours of noise and conversation.
- ☐ **What time of day is best**

Often in the morning or after a nap is best (like you would do with a baby or toddler) when their brain is fresher. Late afternoon or evening when they “sundown” or the light is more challenging puts more strain on the brain.

WHILE YOU'RE THERE

- ☐ **Turn off unnecessary background noise** Television and music don't need to be on while everyone is talking. If they want the television on then mute the volume – they might like to use this to look at when there is too much “brain strain” for them as a

distraction, rather than being antisocial.

☐ **Find a quieter place to sit**A corner or room away from the main activity may make a big difference.

☐ **Sit beside them rather than across a noisy room**Being close can make it easier to hear and follow what you're saying.

☐ **Speak to them directly**Try not to ask questions from another room or while walking away.

Say their name before the question starts to get their attention and focus first.

☐ **Give them time to respond**Don't assume they haven't understood just because they haven't answered immediately.

☐ **Try one person talking at a time**Several people asking questions or talking at once can quickly become overwhelming.

☐ **Watch for signs they've had enough**Becoming quiet, looking confused, withdrawing from the conversation, becoming restless or appearing tired can all be signs that the environment is becoming too much.

IF THINGS BECOME OVERWHELMING

☐ Don't assume they are being difficult

☐ Don't insist that they stay in the middle of the group

☐ Offer a quieter space

☐ Reduce the number of people talking

☐ Give them some time to settle

☐ Remember that they may still want to be involved — they may simply need less noise around them

One of the most helpful things you can do is give them permission to relax.

If they are worried about remembering what is happening next, reassure them:

“You don't need to remember. I'll let you know when it's time.”

Knowing that someone else is keeping track of what happens next can take some of the pressure off them.

They don't have to keep using their brain to remember when they are leaving, who is coming or what they are supposed to do next.

They can simply relax and enjoy the moment.

Remember, A person who prefers quieter, smaller gatherings isn't necessarily becoming antisocial.

They may simply have discovered that **less noise means less work for their brain.**

A quiet cup of tea with one person may be far more enjoyable — and far less exhausting — than sitting in a noisy room full of people.

Less noise + Less pressure = More connection.