



## Hints for Communicating with people with cognitive disabilities

Try to keep your **surroundings quiet** and free from distractions.

**Make eye contact** before you speak and say the person's name often.

**Use simple language**, repeat points, speak slowly and clearly.

**Clearly identify yourself**, explain why you are there.

**Give one direction**, or ask one question at a time.

Have person **repeat directions/instructions** in their own words.

**Ask open-ended** rather than "yes/no" type questions.

**Be patient** for response.

**Avoid abstract questions** on time/sequences/reasons for behavior.

**Observe behavior** as nonverbal communication.

Treat an adult as an adult, but **be sensitive to their special needs**.

Partners in Justice 1-800-662-8706

This project is supported by The Arc of North Carolina and the NC Council on Developmental Disabilities and the funds it receives through P.L. 106-402, the Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act of 2000.



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### Traits Often Seen

#### **May not communicate at age level:**

- Limited vocabulary
- Difficulty understanding/answering questions
- Mimic answers/responses
- Unable to communicate events clearly in his/her own words

#### **May not understand consequences of situations:**

- Unaware of seriousness of situations
- Easily led or persuaded by others
- Naive eagerness to confess or please

#### **May not behave appropriately:**

- Unaware of social norms and appropriate social behavior
- Acts younger than actual age, may display childlike behavior
- Displays low frustration tolerance and/or poor impulse control

#### **May have difficulty performing tasks:**

- Inability to read, write, tell time, change money
- Difficulty staying focused and easily distracted
- Awkward/poor motor coordination

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