



In order for comprehensive care planning to take place, so that each resident's needs and preferences are fully acknowledged, it is imperative that a resident's family and loved ones are consistently involved in care conversations with the interdisciplinary staff team. If a resident does not have family or their family isn't local, there are creative ways that you can connect with their loved ones so that you can begin to deeply know that resident's life story and interests to provide the best quality of life.

EMBRACING FAMILY RELATIONS

- 1** **Communicate:** Establish a relationship of mutual trust and respect with family members. This can start by setting aside time to meet with the family regularly, showing up to these meetings on-time and using active listening skills during your discussion. On the other hand, families must approach these meetings willing to be completely transparent about their loved one's life history, current physical and psychosocial needs and their interests.
- 2** **Collaborate:** Families should know that staff cannot provide the best life enrichment for their loved one if they are not willing to assist in finding the best activities for engagement. This means that families should be asked for their opinion when a particular intervention isn't working and staff should listen and start a discussion about what a more appropriate engagement technique may be.

- 3 Validate:** Many times families have a complicated relationship with their loved one as well as other family members that may be involved in care planning for the resident. Staff should practice patience and empathy when discussing the resident and their needs and understand that family members may be struggling with the assisted or skilled level of care that their loved one is now receiving. Resources on the Validation Method can be found here: <https://vfvalidation.org/>
- 4 Educate:** For residents who are experiencing the early stages of Alzheimer’s disease and related dementias (ADRD), their family members may still be unsure of what the diagnosis means for their loved one. Information on ADRD which may come naturally to us as practitioners in the field, could be quite foreign to family members. Be sure to set aside time to answer questions about the diagnosis and how life enrichment can be a supportive tool as the resident progresses and his or her abilities or interests may change.
- 5 Group Activities:** One way to actively engage families and build a strong relationship with them is to regularly invite them to join in on activities with residents. For instance: A cooking or baking class, scrapbooking, puzzles or games, an outing to a cultural spot like a museum, enjoying time looking at nature, and having a Skype call with loved ones.

Linked Senior has created cue cards and other resources to help you, they’re available at linkedsenior.com. As always, feel free to contact us if you have any questions or want to learn more!