

Revealing, Recognising, Rewarding Positive Role Models

# YOPEY – the Young People of the Year charity

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## Suggestions for visiting someone with dementia

Dementia covers a group of symptoms such as memory problems, decreasing ability to think or reason and difficulty communicating.

People with dementia can become muddled, anxious and frightened, and may have trouble recognising people. Their behaviour can be unusual and awkward. They may find it hard to express themselves or understand people. However, feelings remain. Visits can stimulate warm feelings and bring comfort. At YOPEY we talk about Befrienders leaving the befriendeds with 'warm and fuzzy' feelings.

**Wear** something bright or colourful. We recommend girls wear trousers.

**Approach** from the front (don't tap on the back or shoulder)

**Introduce** yourself with an explanation. Hello, I'm your YOPEY Befriender from NAMESCHOOL. My name is...

**Smile** and make eye contact

**Sit** at the same level or lower. Perhaps **touch** their hand if appropriate

**Speak** simply, one comment at a time. **Listen** and give time for answers or comments. **Be positive** and reassuring

**Avoid questions** about choices. Once you know someone's preferred drink say would you like a cup of tea? (not, tea or coffee) **Accept** incorrect statements as they may be caused by memory loss or faulty logic.

**Acknowledge** the emotions behind the words. Above all else **BE PATIENT**.

## Suggestions – things to take or do

**Take** a magazine, postcard, flower catalogue.

**Play** a game – draughts, dominoes, ludo, etc

**Listen** to familiar music on your mobile phone etc. Find out their likes and put together a playlist for your next visit.

**Watch** a films of flowers, gardens, water views

**Reminisce** about the past, people or places.

**Look at** photographs or illustrated books

**Read** a passage from a familiar book or it could be a poem. If both you and your friend are religious it could be the book of your religion.

**Smile**, and share laughter.

If appropriate, take a soft toy for them to hold or stroke, or a lavender bag to evoke memories

The visit need not last long. It is the feelings that remain not the length of time spent. They might well forget that you came but the warmth and feelings of your care will not be forgotten.

You may be distressed by their condition but be encouraged in that you will have lessened their isolation and loneliness by your visit.

Departure should not be a 'big deal'. "Parachute in, evaporate out"

## Feelings remain when facts are forgotten

with thanks to Dr Jennifer Bute who is living with dementia. Visit her website [gloriousopportunity.org](http://gloriousopportunity.org)

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