

3 tips for stepping into someone's reality

In traditional dementia care, there is the school of thought that says you should never lie to someone living with dementia. People use strategies such as re-orientation, re-direction, diversion, distraction, and/or validation. Another tool to consider is stepping into their own reality.

At GHA, we recognise that there are two realities when caring for someone living with dementia - the resident's reality and our reality. Our reality is the here and now, who that person is now, and their diagnosis. However, for a person living with dementia, their reality could be at any point in their life, and this can change day-to-day. They can be stuck in a moment in time, as a child needing to get home for dinner, or a young professional needing to go to work, and even a parent needing to make dinner for their young kids, when in our reality these children are in their mid-40s and live far away.

Entering into a person's reality is the ability to be present in what is real to them at that moment and not force them into our own reality, leaving them shamed and disorientated. Often a family will use the phrase "don't you remember that...?". Having the ability to step into their reality gives them a sense of comfort and orientation. Here are three tips for stepping into someone's reality:

1. Listen

Listen for clues of where that person is in that moment in time, of that person's lived timeline. Each day is going to be different, so don't assume that if they were living in a particular timeframe yesterday, they will be in there today. So listen for cues to be able to identify where they are.



2. Validate

Validate and legitimize everything they say. If they say they need to go home to make dinner for the kids, your response should be "what do your kids like to eat for dinner?", instead of arguing that the kids are longer at home and they don't need dinner made for them.

3. Be prepared

Be prepared for them to step out of that reality and into a different space. It is not up to you to keep them stuck in a particular timeframe. It is up to you to support them by listening, learning and remaining curious. Getting a diagnosis of dementia is not like any other diagnosis, we know that it is a progressive disease and things will change over a long a period of time. Getting emotional support for the person living with dementia and their family can help them learn to live, rather than suffer with the diagnosis.



Find out more
1300 015 406
www.grouphomes.com.au

 **GROUP HOMES**
AUSTRALIA
Doing Dementia Differently