



A Guide to Understanding Dementia

Hiya guys, as a person with Dementia (Six years now) I have been asked to explain what people in the retail trade might come across when they meet someone with dementia. Here are some Examples.

1. Money handling

Sometimes people with dementia have trouble understanding their money and the currency. You will see them appearing to struggle to understand the amount they have to pay and also the amount they have to give you. This applies in retail as well as Banks, Post offices ECT. A little patience and understanding will help enormously.

2. Confusion and Staring

One of the common things that links people with Dementia is sometimes they can stand there in what's called a "Catatonic Trance" simply put, it will look like they are "Daydreaming" If this happens, please just observe and offer help if needed. Also looking or becoming confused is also very common. This happens when the person with dementia is having a problem focusing on what to do or where to go next. A little gentle reassurance and an offer of help will always be welcomed.

3. Spatial Awareness

This is a difficult one, but one I am sure you will overcome in time. What it actually means is when you can see people stumbling or having trouble walking with ease. I must admit sometimes it looks as if the person might have been drinking, but when you begin to understand the differences between Spatial awareness and other factors you will soon come to realise this is not the case.

A person may reach out for something and not quite understand why they haven't been able to get what they want. Also bumping into things and looking very unsure as where they are putting their next step, you can often see the look of confusion in their eyes. In cases of NON Dementia they usually look confident but still can't get to grips with doing the smallest things, this could mean there are other NON Dementia causes involved.

4. Speech

It has long been known that someone with Dementia tend to repeat themselves and will ask you the same thing, sometimes over and over again. This is where a little patience comes in and a helping hand to take them to what they are looking for. If they can see what they want, usually that will do the trick. Also stammering and stuttering is not always just signs of a speech impediment. It can also be signs of dementia as I know from personal experience. Sometimes people with this illness will try and say something but will come out completely nonsensical. Other times you will see their sheer frustration at not being able to say what they want to say. Mostly you can tell the difference between people with dementia doing this and those who aren't as those with Dementia will look very frustrated and sometimes even angry. People who have lived with a speech disorder for some time don't usually show symptoms like this.

5. Repetitiveness.

This comes in many forms but the most common form after speech repetitiveness is doing the same action time and time again. This may include putting more than one of the same products in their Baskets/Trolleys, or where shops are concerned they may buy the same thing over and over again. This does not only include food retail but also places like Post offices/Butchers ECT. I have personally known cases where people who are KNOWN to the butcher ect have bought up to and over 5lbs old Bacon/Sausages and chops ect when quite clearly they don't need so much and have never been asked the question WHY?" The downside to them doing this can have very serious consequences as very often they are not kept in a suitable "Status" as in fridges and freezers ect.

6. Checkouts

Sometimes this will only apply to the larger retail outlets. When checking the items bought and sending them down the lane please be aware if a person is having trouble keeping up with you. Sometimes the speed the items hit the bottom are enough to confuse an able bodied person, let alone someone with dementia. This happened to me in a very popular and busy supermarket, but, surprisingly, once I had brought it to the attention of the manager they now have advice in place to look out now for anybody struggling with the speed of the tills, a result I think!!

7. Talking about Dementia

This is a subject of much discussion. Some people with dementia don't care who knows (IE ME!!) and others are quite ashamed of having it or are in complete denial. It's your approach that matter's here. God forbid you would ever go and ask someone if they had dementia! You wouldn't walk over to anybody and ask them "Are you disabled, would you? It's the same thing. Always try to keep in mind

that Dementia is a debilitating Disease of the brain, just as cancer is on the lungs ECT or heart problems are on the heart muscles and so forth. It is certainly not an “AGE Related” disease as the first person ever to be diagnosed with this was only 52yrs old. Somewhere down the mists of time we have forgotten that.

If someone offers up the information that they have Dementia, ask them what kind of dementia, how long they have had it and how well they manage it. Sometimes showing an interest in them will let them know they are not on their own, as I have always said this is without a doubt the “Loneliest Disease in the world”

In short, the more people understand this disease and talk about it, the more the Stigma that is attached to it, will be reduced and eventually be resigned to a distant memory. Thank you so much for your understanding and please remember, the person who is having these troubled times in front of you, could one day be you yourself.

Norman Mc Namara Diagnosed with dementia six years ago at the age of just 50yrs old.



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