

Cue Cards for Dementia Care

Cue Cards or Communication Cards are visual tools that can be used to overcome communication difficulties with clients living in long term care organizations.

They assist and support caregivers, staff and volunteers to engage with the person in their care. Cue cards and visual prompts are beneficial for both staff and clients.

Who can benefit from Communication Cards?

Cue cards are especially useful for people living with advanced dementia, aphasia, anomia (difficulty in finding words), and other related conditions affecting communication. They are also useful for clients from non English speaking backgrounds who have reverted to speaking their own language.

Benefits of Cue Cards for Caregivers

For Activity and Clinical Staff caring for clients with advanced dementia, dialogue can at times become a frustrating guessing game. They must often rely on prompt cards and pictures, dry erase memo boards and other external aids to understand and care for them effectively.

Communication cue cards diminish the workload of caregivers by making the task easier and more pleasant (most of the time).

How to Make Cue Cards for the Elderly

Cue Cards are inexpensive to make and may be tailor-made to the needs of each individual. They are a feasible alternative to hi-tech, expensive tools.

- Cue cards should be in **black and white** and with or without pictures depending on the individual.
- Cue cards should be written in a large font (as large as the need be) so the individual is able to read them easily.
- Cue Cards should contain words or short sentences.
- Stick to one medium: stick figures, line drawings, cartoon-like, or pictures (Remember that people with advanced dementia are better off with **black & white** cue cards).
- Laminate for endurance.

Separate Cue Cards into Categories

It is useful to separate communication cue cards into categories such as:

Cue Cards for Dementia Care

- Activities of daily living (bathing, dressing, eating, toileting)
- Emotions and feelings (angry, frustrated, depressed, sad)
- Events, visitors, outings (anticipation, expectation, leisure)
- Memory and cognition (confusion, recognition, anxiety, worry)
- Empathy (support, legitimization, respect, partnership)

Cue Cards to Mitigate Uncooperative Behavior

Cue cards are useful in a variety of situations. For instance, often uncooperative behavior is due to unmet needs. It may be that they are bored because they forgot what they like to do – or that they forgot the way to the toilet.

Flashing a couple of possible reasons to the client may solve the problem. Show cue cards in order of emergency: toilet first and then going for a walk for instance.

Cue Cards to Help Clients Recognize Familiar Faces

When the client has problems recognizing familiar faces, show them cue cards of familiar photos for perusal to help them make the association. This is not always successful but should be attempted nevertheless.

Cue Cards to Influence Clients

Some nursing homes go even further by writing encouraging sentences on cue cards to influence the client. For example:

- "Eating makes me healthy and strong"
- "I am going to shower to feel warm and clean"
- "I am going to the hairdresser because my visitors are coming soon"

Studies on the use of such cue cards have reported positive results when shown to clients prior to the desired activities (meals, shower, and visitors).

Use Simple Sentences & Illustrations on Cue Cards

If you have a Speech Therapist available at your facility ask them for clues on how to simplify sentences and illustrations. For instance, if you have a cue card with the word 'Family' show stick figures (Mother, father and child) walking in a park, or if you show 'Dentist' show a stick figure leaning over another figure sitting on a chair or a tooth and dental tools, etc.

Cue Cards for Dementia Care

Cue Card Templates to Get Started With

Attached are some cue cards templates to get started with. These can be laminated and used as they are or enlarged to make individual flash cards.

Perhaps you can ask a volunteer to help you make cue cards to the specific needs of your clients.

Reminiscing Cards - More Themes for Cue Cards

- Reminiscing Cards – 1940s and 1950s
- Themed subjects: seasons, fishing, colours
- Socializing and leisure
- Music Memories
- Christmas

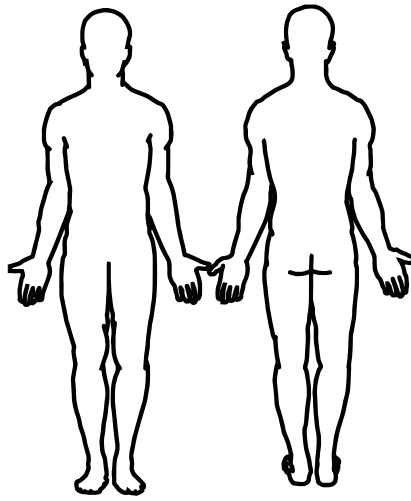
Cue Cards should be personalized where possible

Whatever sort of cue cards you decide to use, ensure they are appropriate to your client's condition and stage of dementia.

Some visual prompts can be shared however for best results, cue cards should be personalised and catered to the needs of individuals.

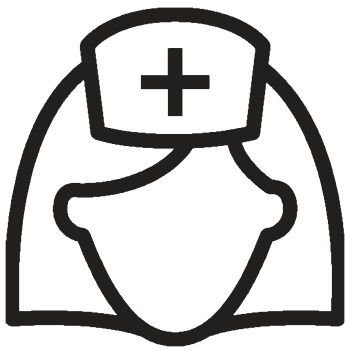
We'd love to hear your feedback.
Have you found cue cards to be useful with your clients?

YES

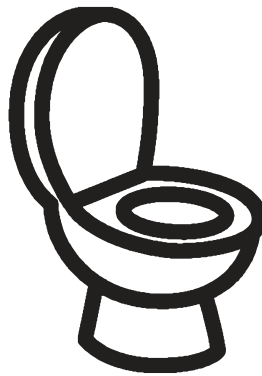


PAIN - WHERE?

NO



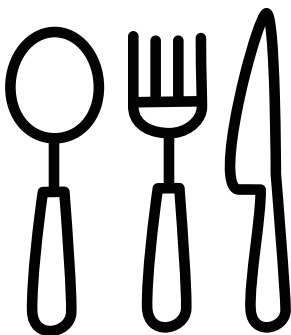
CALL NURSE



TOILET



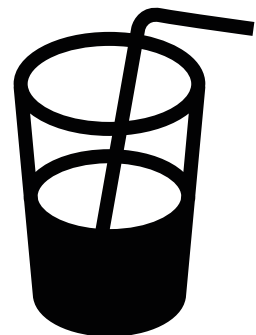
SHOWER



HUNGRY



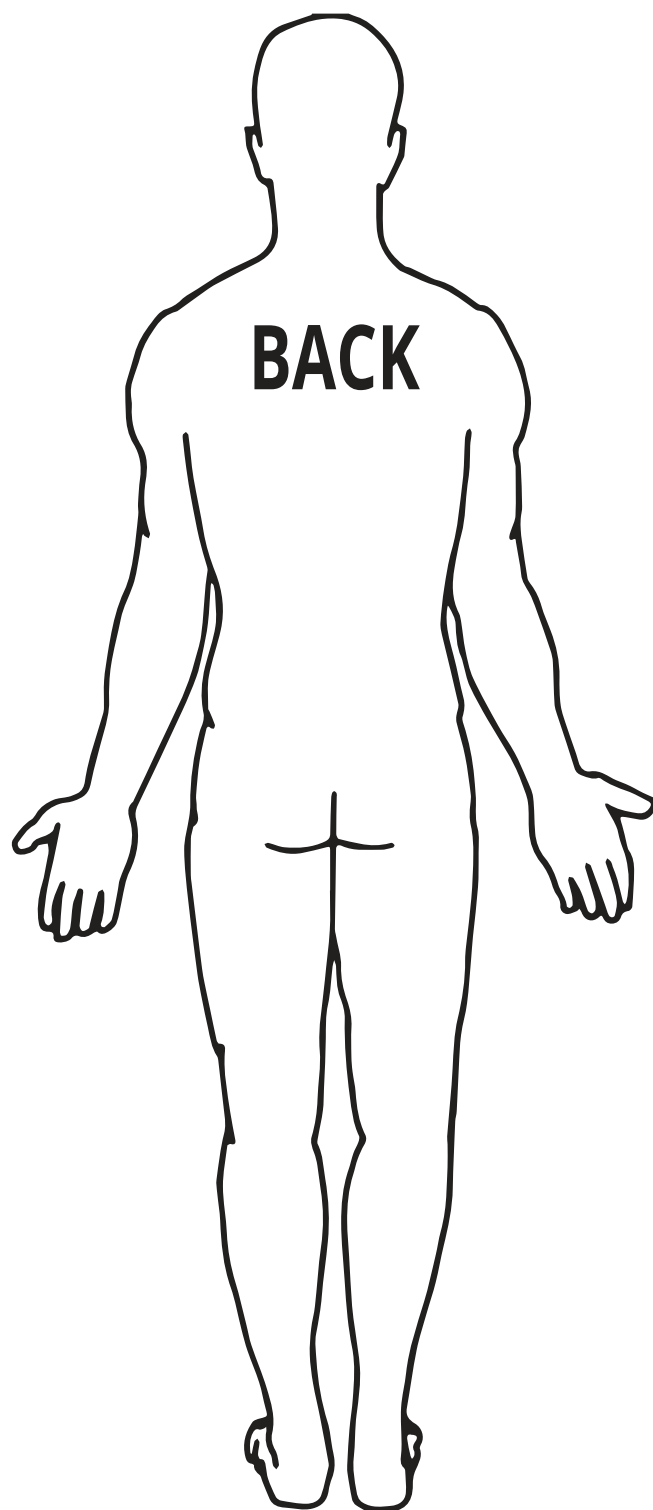
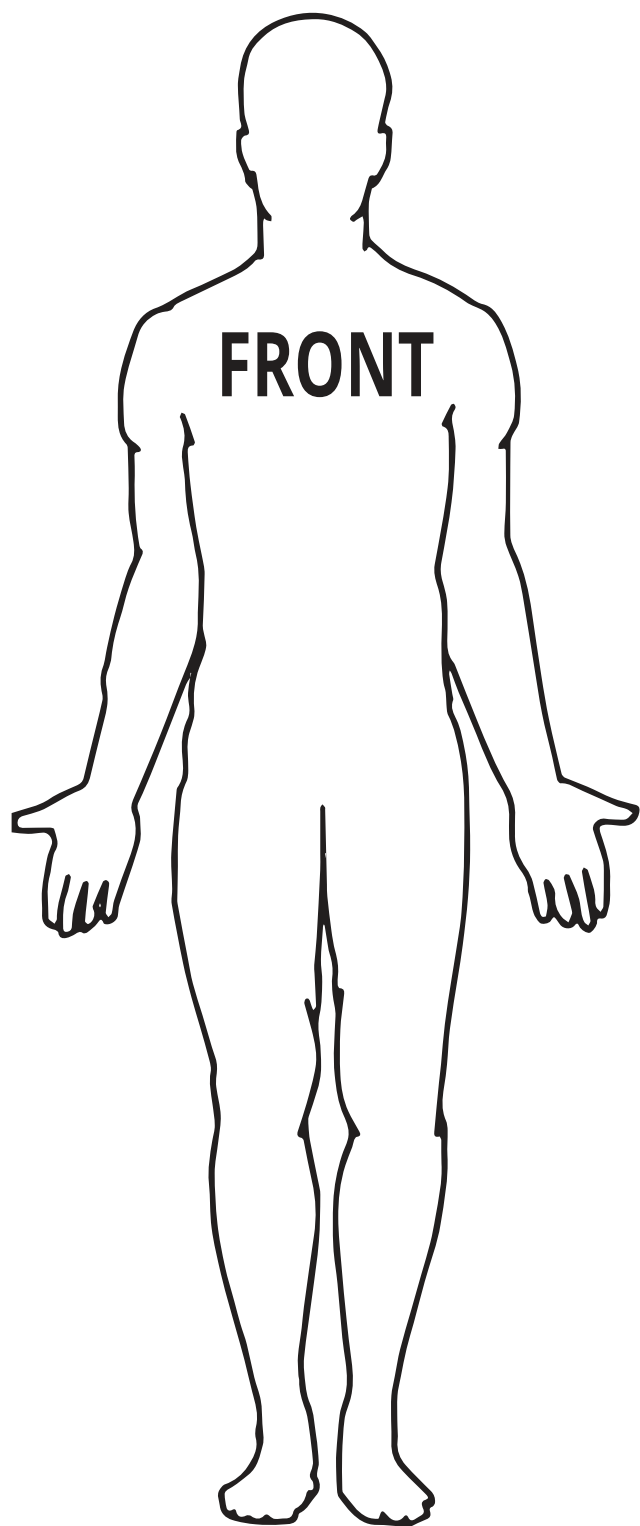
HOT DRINK



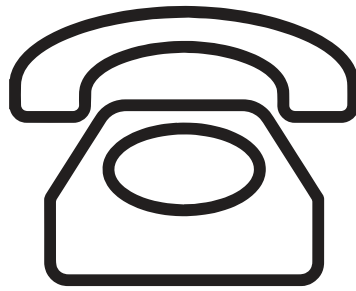
COLD DRINK

YES

NO

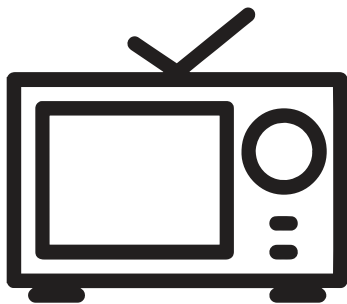


YES



TELEPHONE

NO



TELEVISION



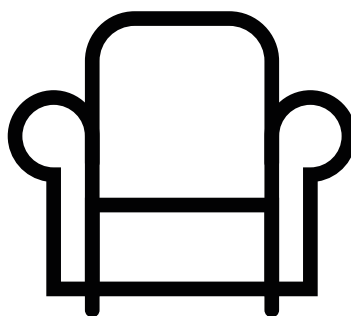
NEWSPAPER



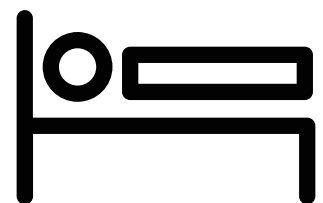
RADIO



WALK

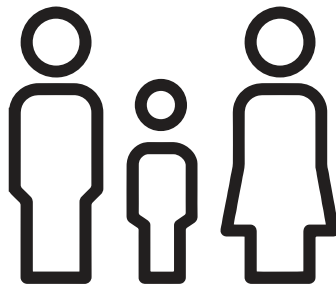


SIT UP



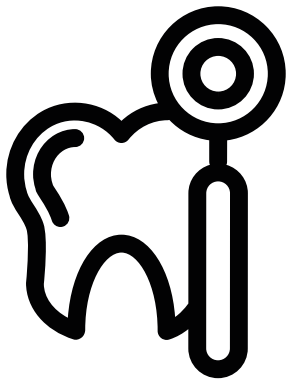
LIE DOWN

YES



FAMILY

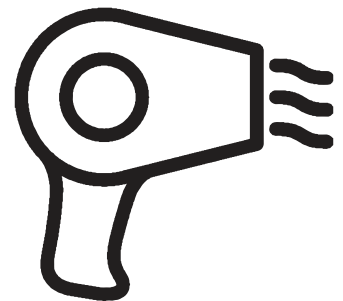
NO



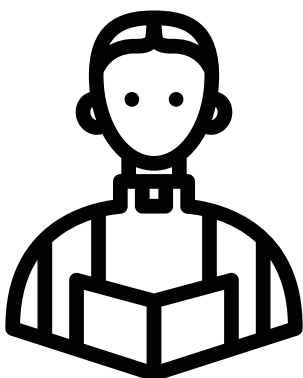
DENTIST



HEARING AID



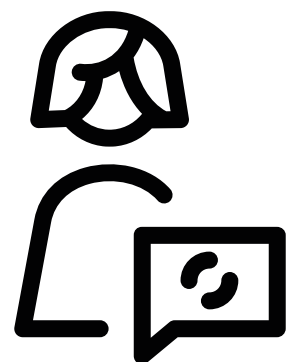
HAIR DRESSER



RELIGION



ACTIVITIES



INTERPRETER

YES



HAPPY

NO



UNSURE



TIRED



SICK



BORED



SAD



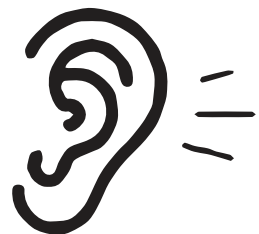
ANGRY



HOT



COLD



TOO NOISY