

Six Ways That I Use PAC Skills During Lunch Each Day

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I first met Teepa at the Alzheimer Society Research Breakfast in Halifax, Nova Scotia back in January 2016. My immediate reaction was “this makes so much sense!” and “how can I learn more?” Since that morning, I haven’t looked back. In September, I found myself in Asheville, North Carolina for the Trainer Certification Program.

I am a care partner to my father who has vascular dementia. He lives in a nursing home and each day, I visit him over the lunch break and we eat our lunch together. PAC skills have made all the difference in the world to the quality of our visits.

Here are six ways that I put PAC skills into use during my daily visit:

1. **Hand-Under-Hand™**

Hand-under-Hand wins top prize as my most loved new skill! I make a connection with dad using Hand-under-Hand and I’m able to guide him to the dining room table with ease. I will say “let’s go this way” and “it’s about time for lunch” and off we go.

2. **Tell me about that.**

This has become my go-to phrase when he asks “Did I tell you about the time that I lived in New York?” I’m very lucky that he still tells stories and I know I will need those stories later on when he is no longer able to tell them. I cherish his stories and our time reminiscing together at the lunch table.

3. **Let him nurture me.**

He is always concerned that I have enough to eat and he wants to share his lunch with me. He’ll ask “Do you have a spoon?” I’ll make sure that I have a set of cutlery next to me and I’ll take a bite of his lunch. I used to just sit next to him and watch him eat but now I bring a sandwich so we are sharing a meal together. It makes the time together much more meaningful.

4. **I talk less.**

I used to chatter all the way through lunch. When I learned about task vision and social vision, and that it is difficult for a person with dementia to focus on both a task (eating) and socializing, I decreased the amount of talking that I do. If I see that he is happily eating away, I don’t interrupt him by making conversation.

5. I provide simple choices.

When the staff person is serving dessert, it may sound like this: “Al, I have tarts today. What flavor would you like? I have lemon, blueberry, cherry or butter tarts.” I’ll change that to: “Dad” and when I have his attention, I’ll ask, “would you like a lemon tart or a blueberry tart?”

6. I leave at dessert.

I used to wait until the end of the meal and then tell him that I have to go back to work. He would get out of his chair and go with me to the elevator and I would have to try to convince him that he should stay here while I go back to work. I asked Teepa for advice and she suggested that I leave just as the dessert arrives. He’ll have something to do while I get up and leave and he won’t be as interested in going with me. It works like a charm. I say good-bye and am able to leave without any problem at all.

There you have it! How do PAC skills make a difference in your day?