



CONDUCTING A PETS AS THERAPY VISIT [4]

APPROACHING & COMMUNICATING WITH PATIENTS & CLIENTS - SPECIAL CASES

A Person who is Confused

- ❖ Visit in a **quiet, distraction-free environment** if possible
- ❖ **Simplify your topic of conversation** to expect a simple "yes" or "no" response and ask one question at a time
- ❖ **Approach the person slowly in their line of sight**, touch them gently on the arm or shoulder before speaking to let them know you are there and use their name often
- ❖ **Speak clearly, not too quickly and maintain eye contact**, using minimal hand movements towards them
- ❖ **Never talk about someone in their presence** without including them in the conversation
- ❖ **Never talk to an adult as if to a child**. Do not patronise them, for example by patting them on the head or talking 'baby talk'
- ❖ If the person you are visiting is **unable to speak**, or their **speech is difficult to understand**
 - Resist the temptation to just say "yes", nod or pretend to understand
 - Repeat key words if the person doesn't understand at first
 - Do not finish their sentences for them or rush them in any way
 - The appropriate communication strategy will vary considerably with the individual. A member of staff should be able to provide guidance regarding the best method to adopt
- ❖ Some people may have **limited attention spans**: watch for signs of uneasiness, restlessness, agitation or just ignoring you and end the visit on a positive note with a sense of closure
- ❖ **Encourage reminiscence**, which can provide a source of comfort as well as an 'anchor' to reality
- ❖ Always **retain a sense of humour** and cultivate a positive and accepting attitude



CONDUCTING A PETS AS THERAPY VISIT [5]

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Visual Impairment - Some definitions

The Disability Discrimination Act defines a disability as *"a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities."*

Partially-sighted indicates some type of visual problem which has resulted in a need for special education

Low vision generally refers to a severe visual impairment, not necessarily limited to distance vision. Low vision applies to all individuals with sight who are unable to read the newspaper at a normal viewing distance, even with the aid of glasses or contact lenses. They use a combination of vision and other senses to learn, although may require adaptations in lighting or the size of print, and, sometimes, Braille.

Legally blind indicates that a person has less than 20/200 vision in the better eye or a very limited field of vision (20 degrees at its widest point). Totally blind individuals learn through braille or other non-visual media

A Visually Impaired or Blind Person

- ❖ When you enter the room, speak to the person and **tell them who you are**
- ❖ Speak in a **normal voice** and **never shout**
- ❖ Do not grab them to attract their attention
- ❖ It is helpful to **describe your pet** during the visit: what he or she looks like, their personality traits and body expressions
- ❖ Be sure to **encourage the person to touch your pet**, as tactile stimulation is an extremely important means of gathering information for someone who is visually impaired
- ❖ **Always tell the person when you are leaving** and give them the opportunity to say goodbye to your pet
- ❖ If you can, have a look at the web site www.guidedogsfortheblind.org.uk for further guidance



CONDUCTING A PETS AS THERAPY VISIT [6]

APPROACHING & COMMUNICATING WITH PATIENTS & CLIENTS - SPECIAL CASES

Hearing Impairment - Some definitions

The Disability Discrimination Act defines a disability as "*a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.*"

A **hearing impairment** may mean a person has no hearing at all, has hearing loss at a particular range of frequencies or has tinnitus (noise in the ears). It may be congenital or acquired and may affect speech or language development if it occurs early in life.

A deaf person may use British Sign Language (BSL) as their first language. This is a language with its own grammar constructions which are different from English. An individual may have some difficulties communicating effectively in written language but may be a very good communicator in BSL. If a deaf person is accompanied by an interpreter you should speak directly to the deaf person. However, not all deaf people will know or use sign language. Many deaf people will use lip-reading when you are communicating with them.

A Hearing Impaired Person

- ❖ Visit in a distraction-free environment with **as little background noise as possible and make sure that any available light is shining on your face**
- ❖ Introduce yourself and speak in **a slow clear voice facing the person and at eye level and don't shout**
- ❖ Use **gestures, facial expressions, body language and touch** to facilitate understanding
- ❖ Never abruptly begin a conversation - first get the person's attention by facing them
- ❖ **Carry a pen and paper**, as a hearing impaired person may prefer this method of communication.
- ❖ The use of **basic finger spelling** may be an option
- ❖ If you can, have a look at the web site www.hearing-dogs.co.uk for further guidance



CONDUCTING A PETS AS THERAPY VISIT [7]

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A Wheelchair User

Don't think of people who use wheelchairs as "sick." Wheelchairs help people adapt to or compensate for mobility impairments that result from many different conditions, for example spinal cord injury, stroke, amputation, muscular dystrophy, cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, heart disease etc.

- ❖ The key concept is to **focus on the person, not on their disability**
- ❖ **Don't** be tempted to **talk only to the person pushing the chair**
- ❖ Don't assume that because the user is mobility impaired that they are unable to understand or speak
- ❖ **It is appropriate to shake hands** with a person who has a disability, even if they have limited use of their hands or wear an artificial limb
- ❖ If possible **sit or crouch down so that you are at eye level** when talking
- ❖ **Don't crowd the person, bend over them or shout at them.** Don't hang or lean on a person's wheelchair. A wheelchair is part of their personal or body space, so don't lean on it, rock it, etc
- ❖ **Be careful of the wheels**, especially if your PAT dog isn't used to navigating around them
- ❖ If a wheelchair user "transfers" out of the wheelchair to a chair or bed, **do not move the wheelchair out of reach**
- ❖ **It is OK to use expressions** like "running along" or "let's go for a walk" when speaking to person who uses a wheelchair. It is likely they express the idea of moving along in exactly the same way