Communication with Older People
Communication

- Giving **AND** receiving of information
Why communicate?

- Important to everyone
- Basis of relationships
Components of Communication

- Sender
- Message
- Receiver
- Response
- Medium / channel
  - verbal
  - non-verbal
Verbal communication

- Verbal – spoken languages, dialects, songs...
Non-verbal Communication

- Non-verbal
  - Body language
  - Written words, pictures, diagrams
  - Photographs
  - Music
The Older Person and Communication

- Social / cultural / educational background
- Emotional state
- Language
The Older Person and Communication [cont.]

- Illnesses e.g. stroke, dementia, Parkinson’s Disease
- Physical changes
- Interest
Physical Changes in Older People

We communicate with our whole body. Any change or deterioration to our senses affects communication.

- Vision
- Hearing
- Smell
- Touch
- Cognition
Your ‘Self’ in communication

- Your feelings, perceptions and expectations of older persons are influenced by:
  - your past experiences, biases, knowledge and understanding of the older person and the ageing process
Your ‘Self’ in communication [cont.]

- Aware
- Acknowledge
- Appreciate
- Accept
- Act
Active Listening

- “Listening” requires the volunteer to be silent most of the time and uses his/her senses to get the total message
- He/She listens with his/her ears to the words spoken and the tone of voice, with his/her mind to the underlying message, and with his/her ears to the language of the body
- The volunteer also listens to himself/herself, he/she notes his/her reaction to the message which he/she is receiving and the way he/she is coping with it
Environment / context and communication

Communication takes place in a context or an environment that needs to be relevant and conducive.
Practical Tips

- Approach from the front
- Speak on the side of the ‘good’ ear
- Encourage the use of hearing aid / glasses
- Communicate at face level
- Don’t cover your lips
Practical Tips [cont.]

- Reduce background noise
- Relax
- Speak in low tone / don’t shout
- Allow time to respond
- Speak slowly
- Use simple words and short sentences
- Combine verbal with non-verbal and other means of communication
Practical Tips [cont.]

- Write things down if necessary
- Pay attention to the said and unsaid
- Stop talking & listen
- Communicate respect & understanding
- Try reminiscence and validation
Communication Killers

- “Don’t worry”
- “Don’t talk about it”
Reminiscence