How family, friends and staff can help with cognitive recovery

NHS
Greater Manchester Neurorehabilitation & Integrated Stroke Delivery Network

Ensure you have the individual's **attention** before starting to speak to them and **reduce distractions** - turn off the television /radio. Have just one person speak at a time.

Remember, communication is not just speech. Try using **hand gestures, facial expression, writing, drawing** and **pictures** too.

Slowing down your speech could help them understand you.

Clear and simple - Use short and simple sentences.
Give simple choices if asking questions, e.g. *"Tea or coffee?"*.

Break up your message - Each sentence you say should contain just one piece of information, i.e. instead of saying, *"We're going outside so do you want to take your coat?"* you could say, *"It's cold. Do you want your coat?"*.

Extra time - After giving information or asking a question, pause and give them plenty of time to process the information and respond.

Repeat - You can help them keep track of conversation by **repeating** the key words and re-phrasing what you have said if necessary. Get them to repeat important information back to you if they need to remember it.

Confirm - Check you have understood what the person has tried to say. Summarise what they have said or repeat back key words.

Remain calm and **contain frustrations** if you have to repeat things.

Include - Talk to and include your friend or relative in conversations as much as possible. Don't talk about them as if they are not there.

Take frequent **breaks** from activities.

Write down important information for the person, preferably in a notebook with their name on it.