

DO'S AND DON'TS OF A FRIENDLY VISIT

The following suggestions are offered in order to ensure a successful friendly visit for both the volunteer as well as the care receiver:

Do's

- *Be cheerful and friendly...* Prepare yourself in the climate of cheerfulness and remember that friendliness is infectious and wholesome. It is remembered only if it is genuine.
- *Be a good listener...* Older people, as a rule, want to talk to someone. They want a "listener". In listening, be patient, as you will likely hear repeated what you have already heard before. Encourage your care receiver to talk. It is good therapy.
- *Be careful...* Do not take sides in personal problems. Let the care receiver tell you about them, real or imaginary, but make no issue of it by taking a position "for" or "against". Keep relations friendly and cheerful.
- *Be regular...* Let the person know when you are coming again. They will have something to look forward to. If you are unable to make the promised visit, be certain to let the care receiver know within a reasonable amount of time.
- *Maintain interest and enthusiasm...* Realize that you have an opportunity to keep the care receiver in touch with the outside world. Discuss current affairs and things that they are personally interested in.

Don'ts

- *Don't disappoint your care receiver...* You may never know how much your visit might have meant. Have a set date for your visit. If it can't be kept, try to select another day, but always inform your care receiver. If you can not come or must discontinue coming, tell the care receiver why, otherwise he/she may think he/ she is at fault and has done something to offend you.
- *Don't reinforce negative feelings...* This can lead to depression. Be emotionally neutral but intensely interested.
- *Don't give advice...* Perhaps the care receiver does not understand a doctor's request or a family member's suggestion and your input is requested. Respectfully recommend that they contact the proper professional or family member in order to clarify the issue.
- *Don't enter into debates...* Controversial subjects lead to disagreements and hard feelings.

- *Don't minimize the seriousness of events...* Some people's lives are quite complicated and distressing. Perhaps they do not have long to live or that they have just been diagnosed with a chronic illness. Stating that "everything will be all right" can actually be harmful rather than helpful as well as hinder communication. Allow the care receiver to talk and unburden themselves with what is troubling them.
- *Don't show negative reactions to anything unpleasant...* There may be odors, bad breath or loose dentures. Do not be critical of this. If this is a serious problem, contact the Program Coordinator so that an assessment can be made as to whether or not additional assistance with bathing, cleaning the house etc. is needed. You are there to bring cheer not criticism.