Strategies to Foster Conversations

Use Visual Cues or Props

- Bring out photo albums, familiar objects, or memorabilia to prompt storytelling and reminiscing.
- Example: “Mom, do you remember this picture? Where was it taken?”

Engage in Activities Together

- Activities like folding laundry, sorting items, or gardening can create natural opportunities for conversation.
- Talk about the task at hand: “What’s your favorite way to fold towels?”

Redirect with Validation

- If she starts talking about people taking things, acknowledge her feelings and gently shift topics.
- Example: “That sounds frustrating. Let’s sit down and have some tea—what’s your favorite flavor?”

Incorporate Her Past Interests

- Use topics she once loved to spark interest.
- Example: If she enjoyed cooking: “What was your favorite dish to cook for the holidays?”

Ask Open-Ended Questions

- Keep questions simple and easy to answer, focusing on her past or preferences.
- Avoid questions that might require recalling recent events if memory is a challenge.

Strategies to Foster Conversations

Encouraging Positive Memories

- Create a “Memory Box” together with items that evoke pleasant memories, like postcards, souvenirs, or letters. Use it as a conversation starter.
- Example: “Mom, let’s look through this together. What does this remind you of?”

Using Humor and Lightheartedness

- Watch a funny video or tell a joke to lighten the mood.
- Example: “Mom, I heard a joke today—what do you think of this one?”

Involving the Present Moment

- “Do you like the way the sun feels today?”
- “What do you think of this outfit I picked out? Should I wear it more often?”
- “Do you want to help me choose what to cook for dinner?”

Tips for Success

Be Patient and Flexible

- Allow her to take her time to respond, and don’t worry if the conversation drifts or becomes repetitive.

Focus on the Emotion, Not Accuracy

- Respond to her feelings rather than correcting details if she gets them wrong.

Be Mindful of Nonverbal Communication

- Smile, nod, and maintain eye contact to show genuine interest.

Keep Conversations Short and Frequent

- A few meaningful exchanges are more impactful than trying to sustain a long conversation.

* Conversation Starters *

Reminiscing About the Past

- “What was your favorite thing to do as a child?”
- “What were winters like when you were growing up?”
- “Tell me about your wedding day or another special occasion.”

Sharing Preferences

- “What’s the best meal you’ve ever had?”
- “Do you like the flowers blooming outside? What’s your favorite flower?”
- “If you could visit anywhere in the world, where would it be?”

Discussing Family

- “What was [relative’s name] like as a child?”
- “What’s your favorite memory with [specific family member]?”

Focusing on Sensory Topics

- “This candle smells so nice. Do you like this scent, or do you have a favorite?”
- “Listen to this song—it reminds me of you! What songs do you love?”

Simple Fun Questions

- “What’s the funniest thing you’ve ever seen?”
- “If you could only eat one type of dessert forever, what would it be?”