

B'tzelem Elokim: What's Left When Memory Goes?
NAJC Webinar Series
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Practical Tips for Accompanying People with Dementia

The following are some specific suggestions to guide you in accompanying people living with dementia:

General Approaches

1. Try to remain conscious of the other as a being in the divine image – and know that you can be an important model for others around the person.
2. Work on being with silence, with “nothing happening.”
3. Slow down to keep up. Adjust your pace to the person whose life moves slowly, if at all.
4. Be prepared for “magic moments,” when a person who seems generally quite confused may suddenly speak or connect with great clarity and profundity.

Reaching a Person with Dementia

1. Use position and touch to establish connection. Put yourself at eye level, and address the person when you are close to him or her.
2. Always identify yourself, even if you expect the other to recognize you (it can be very embarrassing to a memory-impaired person not to remember who you are).
3. Acknowledge how difficult it is not to be able to communicate better, to understand one another. Use “parallel talking”—express what you observe the