**10 top tips for dignified mealtimes for someone living with dementia**

**1. Set the scene**

Dining rooms should be inviting, welcoming and have a family feel. The environment should provide sensory cues that it is time for a meal.

**2. Beware of the tableware and crockery**

Use plain tablecloths, placements, and crockery. Patterned tableware can cause confusion and visual disturbances. Additionally, ensure that the plate and tablecloth are different tonal colours with the food also a different colour to the plate. E.g. white mashed potato on a white plate may be difficult to be seen.

**3. Advanced decisions**

Avoid asking the person what they would like in advance – e.g. in the morning after their breakfast! People with dementia experience difficulty with their short-term memory and will often struggle to remember what they requested. Allow the person to choose the food they want to eat at the time they will be eating it.

**4. Visual choices**

Provide visual choices at mealtimes. This may be in the form of a visual menu or showing plated up meals to allow the person to use all their senses to decide what they would like to eat.

**5. Presentation of meals**

Present the food in a nice manner, including pureed meals. Ask yourself whether you would be happy to receive and eat the meals provided.

**6. Protective clothing**

Always give choice on whether someone would like to wear protective clothing for mealtimes and make sure these are dignified and not childlike. E.g. dining scarfs.

**7.**  **Finger foods**

For those that find it hard to eat a full meal, finger foods may be more beneficial.

**8.**  **Family mealtimes**

Sit, eat and engage with residents at mealtimes as a family. Do not stand at the side and watch.

**9. Opportunities for independence**

Provide opportunities for independence. This could be serving vegetables from a self-serving bowl on the table, using adapted cutlery or putting sugar in their tea with assistance.

**10. Hand under Hand**

Become aware of Teepa Snows Hand under Hand technique to help those needing assistance with mealtimes.

For more information about Wellbeing Training and Oomph On Demand please contact **matth@oomph-wellness.org**