

## **Best Friends™ Approach to Family Interactions**

In relating to the family members of a person with dementia, a Best Friends™ care partner...

### ***Gathers information about the Life Story by***

- Practicing empathy and making the process as easy as possible for busy, stressed family members
- Spending time with the *person* to learn directly from him or her
- Asking visitors to help fill in the gaps
- Sharing what has been learned with all other care partners

### ***Handles concerns or complaints about care by***

- Listening carefully to the concern without getting defensive
- Recognizing that feelings of stress or guilt may be involved
- Keeping a sense of humor
- Getting creative in demonstrating examples of good care
- Encouraging families to seek needed services or join a support group
- Stressing the competency and training of the staff
- Asking for support as needed from a manager

### ***Helps families learn to adapt to their loved one's needs by***

- Encouraging families to learn more about the disease and its deficits
- Promoting ways to build on the *person's* remaining strengths
- Inviting family members to participate in an activity or support group
- Modeling the Best Friends™ approach to communication and relationships

### ***Responds to families who can't agree on care decisions by***

- Being careful not to take sides
- Acknowledging each individual's concerns
- Educating the family
- Focusing on the *person* and his or her quality of life
- Understanding that denial may be clouding these decisions