

## TED Talks and PAC Principles:

*Read the Entire Book!*  
by Debi Tyler Newsom, OTR/L,  
PAC Client Relationship Director

I was listening recently to a [TED Talk by Malavika Varadan](#) recorded January 11, 2016, entitled [Seven Ways to Make a Conversation With Anyone](#) and was struck by the parallel of content and our basic PAC principles!

The speaker described every person as a book—we are whole stories, not just a page or a chapter! When you reach for a book that you are curious about, you want to immerse yourself in it and read it from cover to cover, not just glance at a page or two and then say you've read the whole thing!

To gain a true read of another person and have a conversation with others, the following principles were suggested. See if you hear any similarities between these concepts and the Positive Approach philosophy!

Ms. Varadan's bullet points:

- 1) Open the floodgate - go for it! Initiate conversations with others if you truly want to learn about them!
- 2) Skip the small talk! Social chit-chat is superficial - it may lead to other conversations, but don't depend on it to relate on a deeper level.
- 3) Find the *me toos* in conversation! Sharing things in common with others gives you a connection.
- 4) Pay a unique compliment - people may forget what you say but will remember how you make them feel! Be genuine!
- 5) Ask for an opinion - everyone likes validation.
- 6) Listen to listen, not to reply. Be present in the conversation and make eye contact.
- 7) Remember details about the person. A good mantra is one *Name, place, animal, and thing* about the individual.

This is a good summary of understanding another person, right? Does this ring any *PAC bells*? How are these ideas similar or different to what we do in PAC?

We connect daily with others. How can we be more effective, especially with persons living with dementia? This should sound familiar:

- 1) **Approach** — We initiate our connection and conversation in a manner that is friendly, seeks their permission, and supports the person's abilities. For instance, "It's nice to see you, do you have a minute to chat?"

- 2) **Reflect** — We reflect the emotional state of the person we are interacting with, first with visual (non-verbal expressions), verbal (deliberate words, not busy chatter), and then touch.
- 3) **Positive Personal Connections (PPC)** — “I’m Debi, and you are...” or “I’m from Atlanta, and you’re from...” start to build connections and ways we can relate with one another. Common experiences build bonds between us. For example, “How cool is it to know that we both love avocados and have a magnetic attraction to Golden Retrievers?!”
- 4) **Positive Personal Connections (PPC)** — also include noticing something about the person and paying a compliment that is meaningful. If I pride myself on my friendliness or organizational skills, having someone notice that (instead of my snazzy attire) and remark about it will mean more and make me feel proud!
- 5) **Positive Action Starters (PAS)** — are an effective way we partner with someone to complete a task or try something together. Asking for a person’s assistance or their opinion is a way to have them feel like what they think or can do matters.
- 6) **Ongoing Reflection** — attention of the person’s emotions and words by our facial expressions and tone of voice keeps us present in the moment. If we are distracted and inattentive, it gives the impression that the person is not important. We are all too familiar with someone glancing away at other things during a conversation also known as the *squirrel phenomenon!*
- 7) **Know the person** – small details help us connect and show others that they are valued. This also helps us to understand that people are special individuals and we can appreciate their uniqueness.

Using these principles will not just result in a *conversation*, but more importantly, a **connection**. Don’t speed read when you can absorb yourself in each page!

*Debi Tyler Newsom, OTR/L, brings to PAC years of experience working with older adults, dementia care experience, and a long history with Teepa Snow. She was educated at Tufts University in Boston, Massachusetts, with a degree in Occupational Therapy, and has provided decades of care and leadership for rehabilitation settings in Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Ohio. Early in her career, she recognized a passion for working in gerontology, and has been constantly enriched by the colorful stories and experiences of that population. As the Client Relationship Director for Positive Approach to Care (PAC), she helps to coordinate training and service offerings to clients with the goal of growing dementia awareness, skills, and competence. Debi is energized by family, her loyal, loving golden retriever, travel, and experimenting with new recipes, photography, and her latest creative project.*