

How to Feel Comfortable Visiting a Nursing Home:

- 1** Look beyond the physical appearance of the elderly. Think of them as individuals with the same hopes and fears as you. Most of the residents will have pictures of themselves when they were younger. Try to imagine the experiences they have had throughout their lives. Remember that each person is unique!
- 2** Remember that even when someone is confused or comatose, there is a chance of reaching them by touch and presence. Connect with the elderly by holding their hands and looking into their eyes.
- 3** Talk to younger children about the visit before you go. Explain to them that they may see elderly people in wheelchairs or with walkers and prepare them for the fact that they might not respond to them. Be prepared to answer questions about any of the sights, odors or sounds that the children might encounter. Read some books with your children to help them to understand life in a nursing home. A few good books would be "Sunshine Home" by Eve Bunting, "Remember That" by Leslea Newman and "Old People, Frogs and Albert" by Nancy Hope Wilson.
- 4** Get to know the caregivers and introduce yourself to other residents. Find out what events are scheduled and participate if possible. When you get to know some of the residents, you'll feel more comfortable.
- 5** Call in advance to see when it would be convenient for you to visit. Show the same respect you would if you were visiting someone in their home. Make sure your visit doesn't interfere with planned activities such as bathing, exercise or meals. You want to be able to have a relaxed visit. Do things that you would normally do if you were visiting them at home. Don't feel like you have to force an unnatural situation just because you are visiting them at a nursing home.