

## Effective communication with Italian CALD elderly

Choose the right moment and the right place. Don't interview the client out of their home if you need to know how they manage at home alone.

- **Be clear about the purpose of the interaction.** Some elderly may find officialdom frightening.
- Recognize that the person **may be illiterate or semi literate** and have little education even in their own language.
- **Speak slowly, without raising your voice.** Turning up the volume does not aid understanding.
- Keep sentences short, do not mumble, use big words or jargon, do not use baby talk or incorrect English.
- As much as possible, avoid using filler and colloquial words ('um...', 'like...', 'Yeah, totally.')
- **Do not cover or hide your mouth** because in many cases lip movements aid listeners to figure out what you are saying.
- **Italian elderly like to maintain eye contact.** If asked to repeat something, repeat it as you said it the first time. It could be that they simply didn't hear you. If your client still doesn't understand, however, change a few key words in the sentence.
- **Keep a good attitude and be friendly.** Italian elderly love to talk, impatience will inhibit your ability to communicate and can alienate your client.
- If you are a young interviewer, the Italian elderly person may feel uncomfortable discussing needs of a private nature with you.

- **Avoid running words together** ("How ya doin?"). One of the biggest challenges for elderly Italians is knowing where one word ends and the next one begins.
- Avoid questions that can be answered with a 'yes' or 'no' reply.
- **Directly request a person's preferences** rather than assume you know them because they belong to the Italian cultural group.
- Give the person your **undivided attention** and **use active listening**. You will be able to gauge how much of your message is getting through and whether it is being received correctly or misinterpreted.
- If using an interpreter do not address your questions to the interpreter, speak directly to the client. Check if a dialect is spoken before booking the translator.
- Watch for **verbal and non verbal cues** in the communication process.
- Take the time to talk to the person and their family members (if appropriate) about routine daily practices that have a positive influence on their well being.
- Keep in mind that on a certain level the client will be "translating" his language to yours. English words and expressions are influenced by the mother tongue, so things that might sound impolite to you are not always meant in that way. Try to listen "between the lines" before judging the other speaker's attitude.

- Be aware that some cultural practices may be confronting for you, eg keeping chickens - to eat.
- **Use facial expressions consciously.** Avoid negative facial expressions, such as frowns or raised eyebrows. What is, or isn't negative is dependent on the context, including cultural context, so be guided by your situation.
- If unsure whether you have picked up the correct cues, ask for clarification.
- It is culturally **acceptable to touch** Italian elderly on arms, back or shoulders or to assist in movements.
- **Italian CALD elderly often use hand gestures**. Do not be offended by strong gesticulation. It is not intended as an aggressive action.



Does this gesture invite you to listen or is it disturbing?

- Don't agree to anything unless you are certain that you have communicated effectively.

## Gestures used by Italian CALD elderly



Perfetto.  
English translation: Perfect.

**The OK gesture** Acceptable to Italians which means 'perfect'. In Brazil, Germany and the former USSR it is an obscene gesture. In France it means zero whilst in Japan it means coins or money.

**Waving** It means "No" to most Europeans. They raise the arm and bob the hand up and down as if shooing away.

**Beckoning** Italians and Asians raise the arm with the palm facing down and make a scratching motion with fingers. However in Australia and Indonesia, curling the index finger is used for beckoning animals.

**Direct eye contact** Italians maintain eye contact but African American, Native Americans, Asians, Puerto Ricans and West Indians find it disrespectful, intimidating and/or rude. It may also indicate sexual overtones.

**Handshake** Acceptable to Italians and generally adopted around the world, Southeast Asians press hands together; Middle Easterners and many Asians favour a gentle grip while the Japanese bow.

**Nodding and shaking head** Usually means what it expresses for Italians but has the opposite meaning in Bengal, Bulgaria, parts of Greece, Turkey, Iran and Yugoslavia.

**Thumbs up** Not generally used by Italians. Is a rude gesture In Nigeria, means hitch-hiking in America and obscene in Australia if pumped up and down. In Germany and Japan it is the signal for one".

**V for victory** Not generally used by Italians. In England, palm facing inward towards the face is an obscene gesture.

**Scraping fingers** under the chin is used by Italians often and implies a lack of concern.

**Whistling** Throughout Europe whistling at public events is a signal for disapproval, even derision.



Me ne frego.  
English translation: I don't give a damn.

Communication is the single most important factor in determining whether the clients' needs are being met in the best possible way.

All it requires is patience, empathy, good articulation and knowledge of how cultural behaviours influence interactions.

With practice and knowledge of the many cultural cues, communication becomes easier.

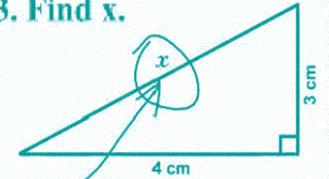
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## Are you interviewing an Italian CALD\* Client?

3. Find x.



*Here it is*

The simplest solutions are often the cleverest. They are also usually wrong!

What appears obvious may not always be the case

\* CALD  
(Culturally and Linguistically Diverse)