

## Practical Tips to Handle Behavior Changes in Dementia

An individual with dementia will go through many challenging behavioral changes. Moods may change very quickly. There are times a person may get upset because they are frightened that they can no longer do the things they used to be able to do.

There are time when they may no longer be able to express their feelings, so the may act out in anger with violent behaviors or crying.

Some individuals with dementia may not behave well in public. Be prepared for some embarrassing interactions.



You, as a family care partner may not be able to prevent all challenging behaviors, you can prepare and limit your frustration.

### Practical Tips to Handle Challenging Behaviors

- **Pay attention** to what your family member with dementia is saying to you. Looking them in the eye, touching them on the hand or shoulder will let your family member with your body language that you are listening.
- **Keep surroundings simple** and pleasant. Remove clutter, keep noise and distractions to a minimum, be aware of what is on the TV. Lower the ring on the phone.

- **Make your family member feel safe.** Keep in familiar surroundings, do not leave with strangers or alone too long with out familiar support.
- **Encourage rest periods** between activities that are challenging. Challenging behaviors occur at times due to being over tired.
- **Never argue with a person with dementia.** If your family member with dementia becomes violent, stand back and become quiet. Give time for them to calm down. Approach your family member slowly. Try to soothe with calm, comforting words. Remember, even if they do not understand your words, they will pick up on your mood. Remain upbeat.
- **Do not confuse with giving multiple choices or too many questions.** Simple and routine is very important. When giving choices it should be between one or two items. No more. Ask “yes” or “no” questions to make things easier.
- **Limit the amount of light and noise in a room.** Too much noise may be distracting and cause challenging behaviors. Keeping an area calm, quiet may decrease challenging behaviors.
- **Observe personal comfort.** Is your family member in pain, hungry, thirsty or need to go to the bathroom? Discomfort and not being able to express what is wrong can lead to negative behaviors.



## **Bowel and Bladder Issues May Cause Problem Behaviors**

The person with dementia may:

- Forget where the bathroom is
- Not realize they have to go to the bathroom
- Have a change in appetite that leads to constipation or dehydration.
- Have other medical problems, such as a urinary tract infection, a side effect of a medication, or an enlarged prostate.

### **Practical Tips that May Help with Toileting**

- Develop a bathroom schedule. Develop a routine to go to the bathroom at the same times every time every day.
- Act quickly when your family member shows signs that they need to go to the bathroom.
- Wear clothes that are easy to remove. Use clothes with Velcro fasteners and elastic waistbands. Sweat suits are a good choice.
- Put a picture or a sign on the bathroom door. You may want to put signs with arrows to the bathroom, if your family member gets lost often.
- Use a raised toilet seat and install grab bars if getting on and off the toilet is a problem.
- Use of protective pads or adult incontinent briefs may be necessary if wetting and soiling becomes a problem.





- Avoid serving foods and beverages that may irritate the bladder. This includes acidic fruits and fruit juices, alcohol, and caffeinated drinks. Ask your health care provider for a complete list of foods that should be avoided.
- Do not serve liquids three hours before bedtime. Always makes sure your family member uses the toilet before bedtime.
- When you are going out, plan on taking an extra set of clothes with you. Make sure that you have your family member use the toilet before you leave. When you arrive at your destination, find out where the restrooms are. Try to keep on the toileting schedule you use at home.
- Always ask your health care professional for other ways to control your family members bowel or bladder.