



## Dementia Care - Key Points to Master

- Individuals with Dementia have a disease that is causing physical damage to their brain. Never blame them for the way they are acting. They **cannot** help it. People with dementia often **experience changes in their emotional responses**. They may have less control over their feelings and how they express them. For example, someone may be irritable, or prone to rapid mood changes or overreacting to things. They may also appear unusually uninterested in things or distant.
- They are no longer able to “change”. It is up to **us** to adapt to this new situation and **their** journey.
- They still have thoughts and feelings and need love with understanding. They may get to a point where they can no longer express their emotions, but they are still experiencing them!
- Do not hold onto the past and base your expectations on how the person acted before the dementia. We have to adjust **our** thinking and expectations. This is a shift in their world causing a direct effect in ours.
- Do not argue with them, even when you know you are correct or right. You cannot win and will make the situation worse. **Redirect - don’t correct!!!!** This is their reality, their journey; you are a guest, a visitor. Show them respect on their journey. Learn to let things go and move on.
- When problems arise, do not automatically blame the dementia and assume this is how things will be. If we look hard enough, we can find a “trigger” that is causing undesirable behavior. Look at the situation, what happened prior to them getting upset, or refusing to do something? Really dig and look. There is ALWAYS a trigger.
- Do not say “NO” to unwanted behaviors. Remember you are still dealing with an adult and not a child. Instead, look for ways to redirect or distract from behavior. Remember to use the correct tone of voice. Always remember they are an adult. We do not want them frustrated, humiliated, or belittled in any way.
- Learn to pick your battles. If they are doing something which you feel is wrong or inappropriate but does not cause them danger, let it go!! If they are doing something childish but causing no harm, let it go!!
- Do not “Correct” them all the time. Again, **this is their journey, their reality, not yours**. Over-correcting or repetitive correcting causes frustration, withdrawal, distrust, and many other emotional consequences. They will pull away from you, not the result we want.
- **Their** world is based on emotions now, most that they cannot deal with or identify, which frustrates and scares them. They cannot communicate that to you, which frustrates and angers them more.....beginning a horrible cycle. Be understanding and aware at all times.
- We must change **OUR** mindset: Our approach, our expectations, and our understanding of this disease.

## **REACT versus RESPOND:**

“Tell me about it”

“Will you show me?”

“ I am sorry.....”

Use “mirroring” and give it back to them, validate their feelings

## **COMMUNICATION:**

**ALWAYS** Approach **FROM THE FRONT**, make eye contact, get on their level and use their name, focus on them

Speak clearly and calmly, **allow them time to respond!**

Avoid background noise

Offer limited choices but **always** allow them to participate

### **AVOID QUESTIONS!**

Don't ask “Do you remember?”, “Do you want to?”

Always avoid questions where they have to give a correct answer. They may draw a blank and become embarrassed and frustrated, which will lead to withdrawal and possible agitation. Make statements instead: It is time for lunch! Let's take our medication, time to take a shower, etc.

**LISTEN** for emotions....**always address and validate them!** Again, be understanding and aware.

Activities: They **do not** have to be completed nor do they have to be done correctly. ***The goal is to engage.*** Do not correct. Do not get discouraged. Activities are to spend time with each other, no winners or losers. Reward the smallest steps or accomplishments.

Therapeutic fibbing: You **WILL** have to learn to fib to ease them, calm them down, and get them to do things. It is part of the journey.

### **KNOW THE DIFFERENCE!**

Hallucinations – We find them offbeat, odd, upsetting, and crazy but to **THEM THEY ARE REAL**. Validate them and explore, discuss without judgment or correction.

Delusions – Accusations, suspicions, jealousy, and paranoia are **ALL VERY COMMON** and real in their world. Do not argue, attempt to correct. Instead redirect them, distract them.

Misinterpretations – Hallucinations, delusions, paranoia and all the above could be caused by other things. **Talk to your Care Manager!**

Changes in their brain, level of dementia advancing

Dehydration

Physical problem: pain, infections (sinus, cold, flu, etc), UTI's, dental/tooth infection, etc

Medication interactions or a “cocktail” of medications causing issues

Change in the environment or their home, a move

Head trauma

Loss of a loved one or a pet, even a neighbor

Eyesight or hearing issue

Lack of Oxygen

Psychiatric illness