

# Challenging behaviour



As the dementia gradually affects the way a person thinks and communicates, it also affects their behaviour. Someone with dementia may act in a certain way because they don't understand what is happening or are frustrated because they can't communicate or do things the way they want. Dementia can cause challenging behaviours that we are not always prepared for to handle.

Try to understand why this person behaves like he or she does and that these behaviours may be their way of trying to communicate how they are feeling. Remember that someone with dementia is not being difficult on purpose, but is just trying to find their way in a world that makes less and less sense to them.

The following tips can help deal with certain behaviours someone with dementia may display. Remember to don't rush and be patient; things are not going as fast as they used to. And always treat the person with the respect and understanding he or she deserves!



oh well, maybe  
I can't recall what  
happened yesterday.  
You don't know what  
will happen  
tomorrow either.

*Forget dementia, remember the person*



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# 6 Tips for challenging behaviour

## Understanding dementia related behaviour



*Always remember:*



### Distract & Redirect

If someone with dementia becomes irritated, angry or impatient, let go of the goal you had in mind and focus on what the other person feels. Don't say 'no' to a request but confirm the present feelings, show understanding and try to distract by talking about something else or changing the environment by going for a walk together or making something to eat.



### Affection & reassurance

Someone with dementia often feels confused, anxious, and unsure of themselves. They can confuse reality and may recall situations that never occurred. Don't disagree or correct when this happens and avoid arguing. Stay focused on their feelings and respond with support, and reassurance. Sometimes holding hands, a touch or a compliment is enough.

*Specific behaviour*



### Repetitive behaviour

Repeating the same question or activity may be a result of memory loss where someone can't remember what they've said or done or the answers they received to a question. Or they are repeating themselves because they feel anxious or frightened. Stay patient and sensitive and try to find out if there is a reason for the repetitive question or behaviour.



### Shouting and screaming

As the illness progresses, more aggressive behaviour can occur. A person may scream, shout, have delusions or use abusive language. This can be the response for not understanding what is going on or not being able to express themselves like they used to. Take the time to explain what is happening and check if the environment could be causing distress.



### Losing inhibitions

Someone with dementia may lose their inhibitions and behave in ways that is embarrassing and distressing for both the person with dementia as those around. This can include being rude, saying things that aren't appropriate, talking to strangers and undressing in public. Remember they don't understand that what they are doing is inappropriate. Stay calm and gently distract the person.



### Agitation and restlessness

People with dementia often develop restless behaviours, such as pacing up and down, wandering around and agitated fidgeting. Agitation can many forms. Always check that the person is not in pain and there is nothing that makes them feel uncomfortable. Engaging in activities may help. If a person fidgets a lot, give a soft toy or tissue to occupy their hands.



### Suspicion

Dementia causes loss of control over a person's life. Not knowing what is happening can cause suspicion which can lead to unpleasant situations. Don't take it personal and do not feel offended by false accusations. Try to imagine what it's like to keep losing everything and not remember things. Calmly explain the real situation and reassure the person while redirecting their attention.

