

# Understanding Dementia: Challenging Behaviours

## I'm sure he's doing this on purpose!

*"First she thinks the caregiver is stealing her sunglasses and now she accused me of having an affair."*

*"When I tried to help Dad wash up, he hit me."*

*"My husband follows me so closely I can't stand it. But if I go in another room he'll wander out of the house."*

*"Mom started unbuttoning her shirt in the middle of the restaurant!"*

*"Just when I'm completely exhausted at the end of the day, he seems to get revved up. He keeps peeking out of the windows, convinced that someone is trying to break in. Now he won't sleep."*

## The 7 R's

These "7 R's" give you a basic platform for responding to any frustrating behaviour:

1. Reassure the person
2. Review the possible causes
3. Remove any triggers
4. Redirect behaviour or attention
5. Restore yourself
6. Review what happened
7. Reach out for help as needed

See attached pages for more details.



### References:

<https://betterhealthwhileaging.net/how-to-manage-difficult-alzheimers-behaviors-without-drugs/>

## Challenging Behaviours

Challenging behaviour is a reaction to a set of circumstances, expressing something that the person may be otherwise unable to convey.

As cognitive and communication abilities wane, it becomes harder for a person with Alzheimer's to say things like, "I'm confused" or "I'm feeling anxious" or "I just want to be left alone".

The natural response to all these challenges is frustration, defensiveness, anger, anxiety, or fear. We all act in certain ways when we're feeling uneasy, mad, insecure, frustrated and so on. These are magnified in someone with dementia who is even less equipped to deal.

A common approach to difficult behaviours is to go right to medicating them with tranquilizers, sedatives, or antipsychotics. But that's risky and often not what's best.

In fact, experts recommend trying behaviour management first, and for good reasons: It tends to be more effective in the long run than "chemical restraints", has no dangerous side effects, and leads to a better care relationship. But people often don't know how to do this.

## The WHY This, TRY This approach

**WHY This?** There's almost always a "WHY" behind a dementia behaviour.

Just reminding yourself that there IS a "why" can help extend your empathy and patience.

Try to find the "why" - is the unmet need emotional, physical, intellectual, environmental or social?

**TRY This!** Build off that insight to TRY different ways of shifting the behaviour to something less intense, more appropriate, or more positive.

There's no single right way to respond to most situations. In many cases, several different things could work, depending on the person and the circumstances.

Be ready to do some trial-and-error. If one response isn't doing the trick, you can almost always try something else that will.

For more information, please contact us:



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