

HELP FOR CAREGIVERS

Managing Difficult Behaviors

This guide explains the **behavior challenges associated with dementia** and provides **suggestions for managing these behaviors**.

Why do difficult behaviors occur?

- Physical discomfort caused by an illness or medications
- Over-stimulation from a loud or overactive environment
- Frustration caused by difficulty completing simple activities
- Inability to communicate effectively
- The person may be hungry, thirsty, or bored



Understand the problem

- Be aware of the place and time behaviors occur
- Is the behavior harmful to the individual or others?
- What happened before the behavior occurred?
- Did something cause the behavior?

Communication

- Eliminate distractions
- Use short and simple sentences (“Jane, please sit in this chair.”)
- Give one direction at a time
- Use gestures
- Avoid negative statements
- Avoid talking down to your loved one
- Do not correct loved one
- Offer simple, specific choices (“Do you want milk or juice?”)



Ideas to Consider

- Change locks on doors
- Use **child safety locks**
- Use an identification bracelet
- Alert neighbors about the wandering behavior
- Allow for regular exercise to minimize restlessness
- Establish a routine
- Reduce outside noise and clutter
- Try a gentle touch, **calm music**, reading, or walks
- Reassure or try to distract the person
- Learn to recognize certain behaviors that may indicate need or desire for something
- Check medications, paranoia could be a side-effect
- Avoid arguing
- Allow plenty of time
- Keep food out-of-sight during non-meal times
- Choose **loose-fitting clothes** with snaps or zippers
- Accept behaviors that are not dangerous-like eating with fingers



USC Leonard Davis
Family Caregiver Support Center

LACRC
LOS ANGELES CAREGIVER RESOURCE CENTER

USC FAMILY CAREGIVER SUPPORT CENTER

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