



# Care Partner Information

## *Tips for Providing Older Adult Care*

### Dementia Behaviors

It is common for people with dementia to behave in ways that are hard for the caregiver, such as being angry a lot, pacing, or not wanting to connect with friends and family. Many times these behaviors are not intentional, but instead are the result of what is happening in the brain because of dementia. These behaviors cannot always be prevented. But some behaviors can change or stop if the caregiver can learn why they happen and change how they respond.

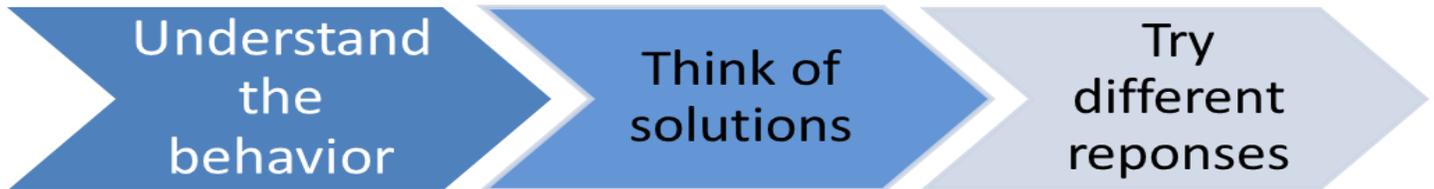
Common Behaviors in Dementia	
Awake and active at night when everyone else is sleeping	Loss of interest, caring or motivation - may seem withdrawn and uncaring
Thinking people are stealing	Acting sexually
Getting upset	Hiding things
Repeating the same things over	Rummaging
Hitting, kicking, or biting	Seeing things that aren't there
Pacing	Doing inappropriate things
Not understanding what is said	Wandering

Sometimes these behaviors are caused by things that can be easily fixed. For example, if there is too much noise or activity. These behaviors can also happen if the person feels rushed or hurried to do a task. People who live with dementia can get frustrated very easily, and it is difficult for them to tell others how they are feeling.

This Care Partner Information page is part of a series on older adult caregiving tips. They are written to help family and community caregivers, direct care workers and community health representatives care for older adults. Available in English and Spanish at [www.aging.arizona.edu](http://www.aging.arizona.edu)

## The 3-Step Approach

Sometimes you can prevent behaviors from happening. Other times you can learn how to deal with them when they occur. The 3-step approach tries to figure out why the behaviors are happening so you can respond in a way that helps.



**Step 1** – Understand the behavior: What was the behavior? What was happening before the behavior happened? What happened right after the behavior?

**Step 2** – Think of solutions: Can you change the situation? Can you change your response? Did the person need something?

**Step 3** – Try different responses: Did doing things differently help? What are some other solutions to the problems? Did you reach out for help?

Remember, behaviors can happen for any reason at any time. Learning how to predict and respond to them is important, but taking good care of yourself can also help. When you are feeling good and getting support from others, it will be easier to deal with the behaviors when they occur. Find a local support group, seek help from professionals, and talk with your providers about what is happening. Below are some tips for managing behaviors.

### Quick Tips to Help with Dementia Behaviors

- Stay calm and be patient.
- Do not argue or try to reason. It won't work.
- Acknowledge the person's feelings, reassure them, and help them not to feel pressured.
- Keep a regular schedule and stick to it.
- Redirect with things like music, pictures or changing the subject.
- Do not take it personally. It is nobody's fault. It is the dementia's fault.
- Get help and talk with others.

**Written By:** Written by: Kelly A Raach, Alzheimer's Association—Desert Southwest Chapter  
Alzheimer's disease and Related Dementia ~ Care Partner Information

Edited by an interprofessional team from the University of Arizona Center on Aging,  
Alzheimer's Association - Desert Southwest Chapter and Community Caregivers