

# CARING FOR RESIDENTS WITH DEMENTIA DURING COVID 19

People living with Dementia may become more confused, frustrated, and display unwanted behaviors during a crisis. They are often less able to adapt to changes in their environment and may react to others' stress.

**When Possible**  
Minimize changes to routine, environment and daily structure.

## BEHAVIOR TRIGGERS AND INTERVENTIONS

### Medical & Basic Needs

*Is this person experiencing*

Pain  
Infection  
Medication side-effect  
Fatigue or poor sleep  
Difficulty hearing or seeing  
Hunger or thirst  
Needing to use the bathroom?

### Try

Work with your medical provider

Address basic need

### Change in Environment

*Is this person*

Overstimulated (noise, clutter)  
Having difficulty understanding or misinterpreting the environment

In poor lighting  
Noticing a change in staff  
Unfamiliar with PPE or equipment used for COVID-19

Feeling rushed, insulted, or threatened from a negative interaction

### Try

Create a safe, comfortable space (warm, soft blanket)  
Move to a quiet area  
Use aromatherapy  
Improve lighting  
Connect with a favorite staff member  
Introduce yourself; offer reassurance and choices  
Slow down, offer choices  
Connect with family

### Emotional Needs

*Is this person experiencing*

Depression  
Fear  
Frustration  
Loneliness or boredom

### Try

Be familiar with what usually calms the person and what triggers them  
Look at photos of friends or family  
Listen to familiar music  
Look at magazines  
Go outside  
Give them purposeful tasks

**REMEMBER: ALWAYS PUT THE PERSON BEFORE THE TASK!**

# FOR RESIDENTS WHO WANDER

## Common Reasons for Wandering

- Loss of memory or searching for the past
- Change in environment
- Anxiety, agitation, excess energy
- Boredom
- Discomfort and/or pain

## TRY THESE INTERVENTIONS

### Loss of Memory/Searching for the Past

- If the person trying to go to work or searching for familiar location, gently reorient and redirect, give an activity with a sense of purpose
- If the person is searching for something they think is lost, keep personal possessions in view

### Boredom

- Try purposeful activities, mental and physical engagement
- If wandering happens a certain time of day, try engaging in activities during that time.

### Anxious, Agitated, or Experiencing Excess Energy

- Is there a safe place for the resident to walk freely?
- Can the resident go outside with a staff member?
- If the resident is a fall risk and has increased energy, are they able to use a stationary bicycle or rock in a chair, with supervision?

### Change in Environment

- If a person is disoriented in a new room or unit
  - Show familiar pictures or items (clothes, blanket)
  - Put their name and/or picture on the room's door
  - Keep in mind you may need to reorient them to the new room several times
- If a person wants to escape from a noisy/busy/overstimulating environment
  - Reduce environmental triggers when possible (no bright lights)
  - Camouflage the exit door

## GENERAL TIPS FOR IMPROVING YOUR INTERACTIONS

- Stay calm, friendly, and remember physical gestures are more important now as residents cannot see your smile
- Speak in a calm, low-pitched voice
- Sometimes the emotions are more important than what is said, look for the feeling behind the words; affirming the feeling may help calm them
- Listen, reassure, validate and remind
- Communicate clearly and simply
- Sit and talk with resident when they eat to help improve intake
- Be aware of past traumas (veterans, abuse survivors, survivors of large scale natural and human caused disasters)
- When asking a question, *wait* for an answer; residents with Dementia often need time to process information