



Caring
for our
Community

Understanding and Responding to Changes in Behaviour

Dementia Advisory and Support Services

Not-for-Profit Health & Human Services

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Recipe for Healthy Living

How to use this little booklet:

This booklet has been designed to give you ideas on how to enjoy living life together with a person who has dementia.

Take the time to discover the past and present memories which have built the foundations of your life and will also enhance your future together.

Therefore this booklet will assist you, your family and friends to understand and move with the changes associated with dementia.

So read the following and complete the blank pages at the back of this booklet with your ideas.

Some Early Signs of Dementia

- Not being able to recall details of recent events and conversations.
- Becoming slower at grasping new ideas, or losing the thread of what is being said.
- Taking longer to do routine jobs.
- Experiencing difficulty adapting to change and an unwillingness to try new things.
- Losing interest in hobbies and activities.
- Being irritable and easily upset.
- Having difficulty finding the right words.
- Showing poor judgment and making poor decisions.
- Blaming others for mislaid items.
- Repeating oneself.
- Being confused on occasions.

Personality

Each of us is unique. We all have our own individuality and personality. We react and respond differently in every day situations.

However dementia can impose some common changes to how a person would 'behave'.

Therefore, remind yourself that the person's behaviour is part of their journey.

- Try not to take the behaviour personally, and be aware that both of you may make some mistakes along the way.
- Find things that work well for both of you.
- Understand the meaning behind certain behaviours.

Understanding Needs

We all have needs, including YOU! A person with dementia may not be verbally able to communicate their need. It is helpful to try to understand these situations from the other person's perspective. Think about it...

What unmet need could be present in the communication? Could the person be trying to communicate with you by using their emotions or their body language rather than words?

Is the person experiencing discomfort through:

- Boredom
- Hunger or thirsty
- Feeling too hot or cold
- Needing to use the toilet

Check with your doctor if you suspect the following:

- Increased confusion
- The person is expressing symptoms of a new type of pain
- Infection
- Side effects from medication
- Expressions of sadness for two weeks or more – possible depression

Triggers

Triggers influence or cause all behaviour. These triggers will be influenced by many factors such as the individual's past experience, culture, previous roles and relationships.

Be aware that the physical environment can also be a trigger.

Once you have identified the triggers, you can begin to think of ways to minimise the exposure to situations that may provoke or influence the behaviour.

- Recognise if you are over-stimulating the person with dementia. Noise and distractions should be minimised.
- Ensure hearing aids are worn and turned on along with wearing appropriate glasses.
- Be aware that an unfamiliar environment or person can cause anxiety and confusion.
- Try to be consistent with routine, keep tasks simple and know the person's likes and dislikes.

Good Communication

Losing the ability to communicate can be one of the most frustrating problems for people living with dementia and can add to the difficulty of maintaining relationships and friendships.

The following tips may help you.

- Make sure you state your message clearly, using a reassuring tone.
- Repeat the message using simple sentences, breaking down tasks into steps.
- If the person becomes upset or anxious, distract their attention or change the subject.
- Think about your own feelings and actions as they may be influencing the person's change in behaviour.
- Are you tired and rushing to get a job done?
- Listen... to confirm and value the person's feelings.

Getting Help

You may learn new ways of understanding behaviour by talking with other carers in similar circumstances.

Some behaviour can be particularly irritating or stressful to you.

Some more tips to help.

- Remember to take regular breaks.
- Find out what services can help.
- Organise respite care, a trip to an activity centre or someone to take over, even for a day.

These can make you feel refreshed.

Summary

- Dementia can lead to behaviour changes, which may cause distress to the person with dementia and place added pressure on carers.
- Understanding why someone is behaving and communicating in a particular way may help families and carers to cope with the condition.
- Discuss your concerns with the family doctor.
- Always remember that the behaviour is not deliberate, it is a symptom of the person's condition and a form of communication.
- ***Seek further information!***

Notes

The following support services may help you:

- ***Your Doctor or Health Professional***
- ***Ozcare*** provides quality health and community services to clients across Queensland. These services are available to all members of the community. Ozcare's Dementia Advisory and Support Service assists people living with dementia their family and their carers. T: 1800 Ozcare (1800 692 273)
- ***Carers Queensland*** (Carer Support) T: 1800 242 636
- ***Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre***
CRCC provides community information, services, carer respite and support.
T: 1800 052 222
- ***National Dementia Helpline*** (Alzheimer's Australia Queensland) T: 1800 100 500
- ***Dementia Behaviour Management*** Advisory Service (24 hour Clinical Support)
T: 1800 699 799
- ***24 Hour Dementia Helpline*** (Alzheimer's Association of Queensland)
T: 1800 639 331

***Call us 1800 Ozcare (1800 692 273)
or visit ozcare.org.au***

These services are supported by financial assistance from
the Australian Government and the Queensland Government.

Ozcare is a quality certified organisation and has met the requirements
of the International Standards Organisation (ISO 9001:2015)