

Behavioral And Psychological Symptoms In Dementia: Delusion

Dementia is a progressive decline in one's memory and other thinking skills that interfere with the ability to perform usual daily activities.

Dementia does not only affect memory, it also cause impairment in one's ability to judge, plan, impairment in speech and change in behaviour.

As dementia progresses, you may notice the change in behaviour becomes more significant.



Here are some tips to help you understand and manage their behaviour.

“Mum accused me of trying to abandon her whenever I bring her for medical appointment”

Delusion

- A person with dementia may become suspicious of people around them.
- Having false beliefs such as thinking that others are stealing from him/her or planning to harm him/her
- Although the accusation can be hurtful, remember that this behaviour is due to their dementia and try not to take offense.
- To the person with dementia, the idea is true to them, and their mind will not change based on logic reasoning alone.



What should I do?

- **Don't take offense.** Listen to what is troubling the individual, and try to understand that these false beliefs are very real to the individual with dementia.
- **Reassuring.** Let the individual know you care.
- **Don't argue or try to convince.** Allow the individual to express their thoughts even if they may be false beliefs.
- **Acknowledge his or her opinions and feeling.** As most delusion can cause anxiety and fear in the person with dementia, you may say something like: "The thought of someone stealing from you must be very distressing. Let's look around to see if we can find it."
- **Offer a simple answer.** Share your thoughts with the individual. Keep lengthy message simple. Don't overwhelm the person with lengthy explanation and reasonings.
- **Switch the focus.** Engage the individual in an activity, or ask for help with a chore to distract the person.
- **Do not whisper or talk to others about the person** with dementia in front of him/her, as he/she may be mistaken of your intention.



Environment

- Replace/try to find the item. Sometimes the person with dementia misplaces his/her item which can lead to delusional thought that the item is stolen.
- If the individual is often searching for a specific item, have several available. For example, if the individual is always looking for his/her wallet, purchase two of the same kind.
- Designate area for personal items. To place personal items at designated area to help individual trace the items.
- Hearing/visual impairment may lead to false beliefs. Ensure that the individual is able to hear and see well with adaptive devices.

Seek help if you can't cope

If the behaviour is unmanageable do seek help from professional.

Take a break if you are feeling stress.

Get other family member to take over your role.

