

Behavioral And Psychological Symptoms Of Dementia: Delusion

Delusion

- A person with dementia may become suspicious of people around them.
- They may have false beliefs, such as thinking that others are stealing from them or planning to harm them.
- Although these accusations can be hurtful, remember that this behaviour is due to their dementia.
- To the person with dementia, these ideas are real to them, and their mind will not change based on logic or reasoning alone.

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



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.



Tips on how to manage delusional presentation:

- **Don't take offense.** Listen to what is troubling them, and try to understand that these false beliefs are very real to them.
- **Provide reassurance.** Let them know that you are providing care for them.
- **Don't argue or try to convince.** Allow them to express their thoughts even if they are false beliefs.
- **Acknowledge their opinions and feelings.** As most delusions 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 them and keep lengthy messages simple.
- **Switch the focus.** Engage them in an activity, or ask for help with a chore to distract them.
- **Do not whisper or talk to others** about them in their presence, as they may mistake your intention.



Environmental Cues

- Replace or try to find the item. Sometimes, they misplace their item, which can lead to delusional thoughts that the item is stolen.
- If they are often searching for a specific item, prepare a several on standby and as available. For example, if they are always looking for their wallet, prepare two of the same kind.
- Designate an area for personal items. Place personal items in a designated area to help them trace the items.
- Hearing or visual impairment may lead to false beliefs. Ensure that they are able to hear and see well with adaptive devices.

Seek help

Please seek professional help if the behaviour is unmanageable.

Take a break if you are feeling stressed or overwhelmed.

Get another family member to take over or to support your role.



Available resources for caregivers:

Dementia Singapore

A social service agency for dementia care, caregiver support, training and consultancy.



<https://dementia.org.sg>

Dementia Helpline:
6377 0700

CARA SG

Mobile app to access personalised support for persons living with dementia and caregivers.



<https://cara.sg>

Contributed by Nursing and Psychology, Allied Health Services

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