

Behavioral And Psychological Symptoms In Dementia: Disinhibition

Sometimes a person with dementia can lose their inhibitions (control) and may behave in ways that others may find embarrassing or awkward.

Some of these behaviors are:

- Making insensitive or rude remarks. Sharing personal information with strangers.
- Using offensive language that they would never have used before
- Undressing in public.
- Sexual disinhibition (e.g. touching their genitals in public or making sexual suggestions to others)



Some common causes of disinhibited behavior include:

- **Disorientation to the surrounding environment or time.**
e.g. unable to find the bathroom, therefore urinate on the floor
- **Misidentification.** e.g. mistake a caregiver for a spouse
- **Discomfort/Unmet needs.** For instance, feeling too hot or cold, or that clothes are too tight might cause them to remove their clothes. A person touching the genital area might be indicating a need to go to the toilet
- **Loss of understanding of the need for discretion/privacy**
e.g. showing sexual needs in the public



Tips on how to manage disinhibited behaviors:

- **Look for a reason behind the behaviour.**
Understanding the behaviour in a particular way will help in the way we respond to it
- **React with patience and gentleness.**
Try not to over-react, even though the behaviours may be very embarrassing. Remember that these behaviours are part of the illness
- **Do not shame the person.**
Sexual behaviour is a normal physiological (human) needs. If the person is engaging in inappropriate sexual behaviours gently remind them that the behaviour is inappropriate. Lead them to a private place, or try to distract them by giving them something else to do
- **Adjust their clothes to avoid removing their clothes.**
Consider buying pants without zippers or reverse the shirts with buttons
- **Be aware of potential triggers,** if we know what these are we may be able to prevent the behaviour from happening in the first place

