



Dr. Chalfin's Tips for Managing Agitated Behavior in Dementia

- Separate the person from what seems to be upsetting him or her.
- Assess for the presence of pain, constipation, or other physical problem. If considering infection (fever/cough/urinary frequency), stroke (face droop, weakness, speech difficulty), blood sugar or electrolyte disturbance, or other new medical problem, call 911 or go to the ER.
- Review medications, especially new medications.
- Travel with them to where they are in time.
- Don't disagree; respect and validate the person's thoughts even if incorrect.
- Physical interaction: Maintain eye contact, get to their height level, and allow space.
- Speak slowly and calmly in a normal tone of voice. The person may not understand the words spoken, but he or she may pick up the tone of the voice behind the words and respond to that.
- Avoid finger-pointing, scolding, or threatening.
- Redirect the person to participate in an enjoyable activity or offer comfort food he or she may recognize and like.
- If you appear to be the cause of the problem, leave the room for a while.
- Validate that the person seems to be upset over something. Reassure the person that you want to help and that you love him or her.
- Avoid asking the person to do what appears to trigger an agitated or aggressive response.

Other Strategies for Preventing Agitated Behavior in Dementia

- Maintain a consistent sleep/wake schedule, with exposure to bright, natural light in the early part of the day, and relative darkness at night
- Regular physical activity, at least 30 minutes per day
- Regular social interaction, especially routine and predictable social interaction with familiar faces
- Aromatherapy with lemon balm or lavender oil
- Play favorite music
- Visit favorite pets
- Avoid sedatives, antihistamines (Benadryl and similar sleep aids), alcohol, muscle relaxants, strong painkillers, etc., unless directed by your doctor