

Caregiver Assistance News

"Caring for You - Caring for Others"

Area Agency on Aging District 7, Inc.

*Serving Adams, Brown, Gallia, Highland, Jackson, Lawrence,
Pike, Ross, Scioto and Vinton Counties in Ohio*

www.aaa7.org **Helping You Age Better!**



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Better Communication

When the Person in Your Care is Angry

It can be frustrating when working hard to care for someone who argues, refuses to follow directions, and is even verbally abusive. Sometimes, these are the behaviors that accompany diseases such as Alzheimer's (AD). Other times, the person is frustrated by feeling sick or without control over many aspects of their life, and takes these frustrations out on those around them, especially the caregiver. Remember, they are upset about the situation, not you.

Encourage Cooperation

First, make sure they understand what you are asking. They may be confused, especially in cases of dementia, or may be feeling ill and simply unable to respond quickly.

Make Sure They are Comfortable and Not Sick - They may be confused, over-stimulated, or in physical pain.

Be a Listener - Take time to ask the person in your care how they are doing. Sometimes, combative behavior is a symptom of a deeper issue. For example, a person may refuse to be bathed because they are feeling modest. Or, they may refuse to eat in response to a sense of loss of control. Giving the person choices can make them more likely to cooperate.

Be Patient - Your schedule may be overwhelming, but the person in your care is on their own schedule. Allow more time than usual for simple tasks. Too many activities at once can provoke a reaction because the person feels overwhelmed.

Remain Calm - Seeing you calm may help calm them down. When the person is upset, delay the personal care if possible. Can the task you are attempting be delayed until the person is calmer?

Do Not Contradict Their Reality. Affirm their feelings. Say, "I see you are angry." If they believe something to be true, do not disagree, unless it poses a physical threat.

Track the Behavior. Keep notes on times of day, frequency, or type of behavior problem.



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Tips on Changing What YOU Do

You may not be able to control the other person's behavior, but you can control your own. Here's how to appear less confrontational to the person who is agitated:

- Stand to the side of them or at eye level rather than towering over - especially if there are several people tending to them at once.
- Don't expect an immediate response. Allow extra time.
- Keep the room calm. Turn off the TV and radio.
- Speak clearly and slowly. Repeat softly what is necessary.



Handling Angry Outbursts or Uncooperative Behavior

First, try to diffuse the anger. There are several ways to do this. You will have to experiment to see what works best with the person in your care.

You can try:

- Humor—Making light of the situation, but not the person.
- Empathy—"I see how upset you are and I understand."
- Changing the Subject—Address what they are saying briefly and then move on to a different topic.
- Take a Break—Tell the person you have a task to take care of in another room and that you'll discuss the issue in a little while. This will give them time to cool down and you a chance to take some deep breaths to get centered again.

NOTE:

Older people, especially those with AD, are very sensitive to your mood and body language. Use eye contact, lean forward with interest, and keep a relaxed expression.

Communication Is Not Just Speaking

As much as 90% of our communication is non-verbal. When the person in your care can no longer communicate with words, you can communicate that you care about him or her by the tone of your voice. A hug speaks more clearly than words. Music and dancing can also be a kind of communication. People with AD may be able to sing a song with you, even though they can no longer speak. Dancing together can communicate your affection for each other.

Salty Language

Sometimes people with AD use salty language, which they never would have used before they became ill. Don't be offended. It is the disease speaking. Try to remind yourself that these embarrassing behaviors are symptoms of the illness. If the person with AD understood what they were doing, they wouldn't do it.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF

Feeling Victimized in Alzheimer's Care

It is easy to feel victimized if you are caught up in the problems caused by someone else's illness. One natural response is anger. Unleashing anger on the person in your care may make you feel guilty; think of it as a message to yourself that you need more respite or support. Try these outlets:

- Caregiver support groups provide a place where you can freely express your feelings. Members will often offer effective, real-world solutions.
- Make an appointment with a therapist or family counselor or clergy.
- Keep a journal of your feelings.
- Separate the person from the condition. The illness, not the person in your care, is responsible for the difficulties and challenges that you both are facing.



Source: *The Comfort of Home for Alzheimer's Disease: A Guide for Caregivers*

Don't Fall - Be Safe! - Eyeglasses

Be sure the eyeglass prescription is current and the person in your care is using the glasses as advised by their eye doctor. Bifocals can be problematic on stairs, so it's important to be cautious.



Community Wellness Classes

Chronic Disease Self-Management • Diabetes Self-Management
A Matter of Balance Falls Prevention • Diabetes Empowerment

Contact us to learn more about these FREE classes!

1-800-582-7277 or
info@aaa7.org

Upcoming Classes:

Chronic Disease Self-Management

Scioto County - June 7th - July 12th
 in Portsmouth

Diabetes Empowerment Education Program

Jackson County - August 31st - October 12th
 in Jackson
 Lawrence County - May 3rd - June 7th
 in Proctorville

Diabetes Self-Management

Brown County - May 5th - June 9th
 in Georgetown
 Lawrence County - July 20th - August 24th
 in Ironton

Matter of Balance Falls Management

Brown County - April 3rd - May 22nd in Georgetown
 Gallia County - May 2nd - May 25th in Gallipolis
 Pike County - April 5th - April 28th in Waverly





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Safety Tips

A Safe Home Environment for Alzheimer's

Creating a safe home environment for a person with Alzheimer's disease requires changes that would be made for any older person. You should also consider any physical or mental disabilities he or she has that are unique to Alzheimer's disease and plan ahead for future difficulties.

The environment should be suitable or right for the symptoms of the disease, which includes:

- Memory loss
- Confusion about where he or she is
- Confusion about how to get to or find a particular room
- Decreased judgment
- Tendency to wander
- Poor impulse control
- Changes in vision, hearing, depth perception
- Sensitivity to changes in temperature

