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Alzheimer's Caregiving: Coping With Hallucinations, Delusions, and Paranoia

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People with [Alzheimer's disease](#) may experience hallucinations, delusions, and paranoia. These symptoms can lead to fear and frustration for both the person with Alzheimer's and their [caregiver](#).



Hallucinations and delusions

During a hallucination, a person sees, hears, smells, tastes, or feels something that isn't there. For example, the person may see their mother in the room although she is no longer alive. They also

may have delusions, which are false beliefs that the person thinks are real. For example, the person may think their partner is in love with someone else.

Here are some tips for coping with hallucinations and delusions:

- [Tell the person's doctor](#) about the delusions or hallucinations. Discuss any illnesses the person has and [medicines](#) they are taking. Sometimes an illness or medicine may cause hallucinations or delusions.
- Do not argue about what the person with Alzheimer's sees or hears. Comfort the person if they are afraid.
- Distract the person. Sometimes moving to another room or going outside for a walk helps.
- Turn off the TV when violent or upsetting programs are on. Someone with Alzheimer's may think these events are happening in the room.
- [Make sure the person is safe](#) and can't reach anything that they could use to hurt themselves or anyone else.

Paranoia

People with Alzheimer's may also experience a specific type of delusion called paranoia. People with paranoia may believe — without a good reason — that others are mean, lying, unfair, or out to get them. Your loved one may become suspicious, fearful, or jealous of some people. In a person with Alzheimer's, paranoia often is linked to memory loss.

For example:

If the person forgets...	The person may believe...
Where they put something	Someone is taking their things
You are the caregiver	You are a stranger, and they may not trust you
That they know a family member or friend	The family or friend might cause them harm
Directions you just provided	You are trying to trick them

Paranoia may be the person's way of expressing loss. The person may blame or accuse others because no other explanation seems to make sense.

Here are some tips to help cope with paranoia:

- Try not to react if the person blames you for something.
- Don't argue about what's true.
- Let the person know that they are safe.
- Use gentle touching or hugging to show the person you care.
- Explain to others that the person is acting this way because they have Alzheimer's.
- Search for things to distract the person; then talk about what you found. For example, talk about a photograph or keepsake.
- Have extra sets of keys or eyeglasses in case these are lost.

Be aware of elder abuse

Someone with Alzheimer's who is suspicious or distrustful may not have paranoia. They may be a victim of elder abuse. Older adults are often targets for physical, emotional, and financial abuse. Learn the signs of [elder abuse](#) and [when to get help](#).



[Read and share this infographic](#) about how to communicate with a person who has Alzheimer's disease.

You may also be interested in

- Getting tips for [managing personality and behavior changes in Alzheimer's](#)
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Explore the Alzheimers.gov website for information and resources on Alzheimer's and related dementias from across the federal government.

Alzheimer's Association

800-272-3900

866-403-3073 (TTY)

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866-232-8484

info@alzfdn.org<https://alzfdn.org>**National Center on Elder Abuse**

855-500-3537

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