

Responding to Threatening Behavior

Sometimes things can get out of control and feel very scary. These are tips and strategies for dealing with especially challenging behaviors. If you think that you or others may be in immediate danger, call 911.

IF	THEN
<p>The person with dementia is threatening you or acting physically violent, such as hitting, pushing, or kicking you</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Give the person space and time to calm down ● Stay out of arm's reach and position yourself near the exit ● Avoid small spaces like kitchens, bathrooms, and cars ● Remove or secure objects that could be used as weapons ● Reduce background noise (loud conversations, TV, radio) ● Keep a phone with you in case you need to call for help ● Go outside, to a neighbor's house, or public place if needed to stay safe ● Take a deep breath and try to stay calm ● Listen ● Empathize/apologize: "I am sorry this is so frustrating" ● Offer reassurance: "I know this is difficult. It is going to be okay" or "I am here to help" ● Give yourself a break; take time to care for your own needs ● Get help (medical, emotional, social support, respite) ● Call the Alzheimer's 24/7 Helpline 1-800-272-3900 ● Call 911 if you think you or others are in imminent danger <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tell the dispatcher your name and location and that your family member has dementia. Tell the dispatcher if a weapon is involved

IF	THEN
<p>The person with dementia is angry and accusing you of something that is not true, such as stealing from or cheating on them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do not argue or insist that you are right. Avoid using logic and reasoning if the person is insisting on a different reality • Avoid confrontational body language, such as crossing your arms and standing over the person or directly in front of them • Avoid criticizing, testing, or correcting the person • Speak slowly, using a low and soothing pitch • Understand how dementia changes the person's personality and behavior • Try not to take the person's accusations personally • Remember that anger or fear responses naturally subside within seconds (in the absence of continued triggers or repeated thoughts) • People with dementia often forget conflict when the emotional event is not prolonged or repeated • Try to make an emotional connection: "I love you. This is hard. We are going to get through this together"

IF	THEN
<p>The person with dementia is throwing fits or having emotional outbursts, such as yelling, screaming, or banging on things</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People with dementia often become more sensitive to changes in the environment or routine; try to provide a consistent and predictable routine • Simplify the environment; reduce clutter and background noise • People with dementia may use your emotions as cues for their own. For example, if you are anxious and worried, they may become anxious and worried. Take a deep breath and try to stay calm and relaxed • Ask yourself whether you are expecting too much from the person with dementia. For example, are you expecting them to remember information that they really cannot remember? Adjust your expectations and support the person to function at a level that is most successful for them • Consider the emotion the person may be expressing with their behavior. For example, are they afraid of a noise or unfamiliar person? Are they not understanding the conversation and reacting with anger or embarrassment? • If the person is resistant and uncooperative, stop and try again later with a different approach • Provide comforting distractions, such as familiar personal objects or favorite foods and activities • Find moments of connection (try using their favorite music, reassuring touch, reminiscing, storytelling, humor, etc.)